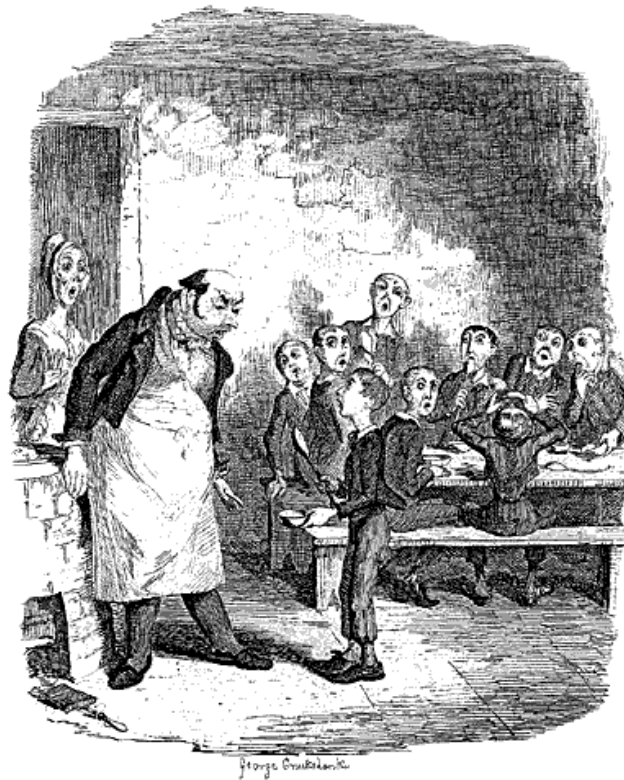


# ‘We’ve taken to you so strong’

## *Oliver Twist* in Norway

by Emma Bruin Ødegaard



A Thesis Presented to  
The Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages  
University of Oslo  
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**‘We’ve taken to you so strong’**

*Oliver Twist* in Norway

Emma Bruin Ødegaard

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2011

‘We’ve taken to you so strong’: *Oliver Twist* in Norway

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## Abstract

The first Norwegian edition of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* was published in 1880. This thesis sets out to discover what has become of the novel and its many adaptations in Norway since then. Taking a comprehensive and inclusive view of how these texts produce meaning, this survey of the Norwegian translations of *Oliver Twist* examines both the external and internal features of the texts. The approach is mainly empirical, yet this thesis draws on a number of theoretical frameworks from different fields, including reception studies, adaptation theory, translation studies and history of the book. In this respect the thesis is interdisciplinary in nature. The Norwegian translations of *Oliver Twist* vary greatly both in form and content, from abridged children's versions to full-length editions aimed at adults. As to structure, the thesis is divided into three main chapters: chapter one analyses the unabridged editions of *Oliver Twist* in terms of their foreignizing and domesticating features, chapter two examines the abridged children's editions, with an emphasis on how their material features help shape their reception and chapter three investigates the Norwegian reception of the many film, television and musical adaptations of *Oliver Twist*.



# Acknowledgements

I can no other answer make, but thanks, and thanks.

William Shakespeare

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I would like to thank the staff at The Norwegian Institute of Children's Books (NBI) for their kind assistance, and Ragnhild Eikli for taking the time to discuss the finer points of Dickens translation with me. I must also mention Alison Coulthard's invaluable help in proof-reading my work, which went far beyond issues of grammar and punctuation.

The past year would have been a much lonelier experience had it not been for my fellow students, who could always be counted on for motivational support and far too long lunch breaks. Last, but not least, I would like to thank Torbjørn Coulthard Jensen for always believing in me and never failing to cheer me up when I have been 'in a very low and alarming state', to use Dickens's words.





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## Introduction

Imens gikk dagene for Oliver. Han var litt redd. Han var redd Fagin. Han var redd Bill Sikes. Han var redd den mørke fremmede mannen. Men Oliver var vant til å være redd. Og han var vant til å ha det ondt. Hos Fagin hadde han det iallfall ikke ondt. Og titt nok var det morsomt hos Fagin. Alt i alt var dagene ikke vanskelige å komme gjennom.<sup>1</sup>

Thus ends chapter ten in a Norwegian edition of *Oliver Twist* published in 1940. The language is simpler than in the original, with short, almost clipped sentences, making it easier for young readers to understand. More significantly, this particular paragraph, which has been added by the translator, provides a reading of Oliver's situation and feelings which is not there in Dickens's text. The irony of the latter, which suggests Fagin as a better alternative than the institutions that had been established to take care of the poor, is here reinterpreted for younger readers: 'At Fagin's, at least he did not suffer'. As in the Newgate novels Fagin gives Oliver to read, life among the thieves is terrifying, yet somehow alluring. Something has plainly happened to Dickens's text in the hundred years since it was first published.

This quote seems to suggest that adaptation is needed to make *Oliver Twist* appeal to children – or at least that the publishers consider it to be necessary. When Oliver reads of 'dreadful crimes that made the blood run cold', Dickens has him respond in the following manner: 'In a paroxysm of fear, the boy closed the book, and thrust it from him'.<sup>2</sup> This is probably not the kind of reaction the Norwegian publishers were hoping for when they published their abridged versions of the novel. The large number of abridged children's versions partially explains why *Oliver Twist* has been published no less than 22 times in Norway, including reprints. *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* in particular have become part of the Norwegian canon of translated literature for children, alongside works by Robert L. Stevenson, Jules Verne and James Fenimore Cooper. Writing about the importance of classic children's books, Tone Formo asserts that 'more than any genre, translated children's literature has become part of what we consider our national literature. It is part of our childhood, our cultural background'.<sup>3</sup> The adaptation of works originally intended for adults

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik (Bergen: John Griegs Forlag, 1940), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 140-141. All quotations from the original text are taken from this edition, and subsequent quotations will include page numbers in brackets.

<sup>3</sup> Tone Formo, 'Oversettelse i Norge etter 1940', in *Brobyggere: Oversettelser til norsk fra middelalderen til i dag*, ed. by Magnus Rindal, Erik Egeberg and Tone Formo (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998), pp. 107-257 (p. 170).

is not a new phenomenon, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* being the most famous examples. As far as the works of Dickens are concerned, however, this trend has been much more conspicuous in Norway than in Britain.

Which inherent qualities, if any, make *Oliver Twist* especially suited as a book for children? There is obviously the child protagonist, although it is perhaps of greater significance in the novel's overall scheme that the submissive Oliver functions as a device showing 'the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last', than as a child hero acting on his own behalf.<sup>4</sup> The plot contains moments of great drama and suspense such as Oliver's escape from Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker, his reception by the Artful Dodger and Fagin, and the failed burglary in which Bill Sikes forces Oliver to take part. These episodes lend themselves well to adaptations for children, and, according to one edition published by Gyldendal, especially boys.<sup>5</sup> Other parts of the story seem more frightening than thrilling at first glance: the horrific conditions and abuse suffered in the workhouse, the disturbing relationship between Fagin and his pupils, the fact that Nancy and Bet are prostitutes and the brutal murder of Nancy, to mention some examples. Then there is the phenomenon which Steven Connor has described as the 'excessiveness' of Dickens's writing. 'Dickens gives us too much, too indefatigably, in too many versions. His is a writing of raw and excessive self-evidence, of a visibility pushed to a certain painful, perplexing limit', writes Connor.<sup>6</sup> What has happened to this central aspect of Dickens's writing in the children's versions?

In this investigation into the Norwegian reception of *Oliver Twist*, I am indebted to James Wesley Brown, whose doctoral thesis covers the reception of Dickens in Norway up to 1912. His survey of a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian auction catalogues of private libraries shows 'a marked lack of interest in the later novels', while *The Pickwick Papers* held the place as the most popular work. However, 'by the end of the [19<sup>th</sup>] century, *David Copperfield* had caught up with its rival, and went on to surpass it in popularity in the twentieth century'.<sup>7</sup> The reception of Dickens's works in Norway during the 19<sup>th</sup> century followed the same pattern as in Britain, with the early works being most admired. The aim of

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Author's Preface to the Third Edition', in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 3-6 (p. 3).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans by. Hugo Gyllander (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1940). This edition was published as part of the series 'Gyldendals Gode Guttebøker'.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Connor, 'Introduction', in *Charles Dickens*, ed. by Steven Connor (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 1-33 (p. 1).

<sup>7</sup> James Wesley Brown, *Charles Dickens in Norway 1839-1912* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968), p. 57-58.

this thesis is to examine what has become of *Oliver Twist* in particular, and to some extent, and partly by implication, what has become of Dickens in Norway in general since then. Such an analysis must take into account ‘the famous revolution in Dickens criticism whereby the later darker novels have come to seem to many the “major phase” and have been made the basis of a new definition of Dickens as a symbolist poet of the novel’.<sup>8</sup> This wave of interest in Dickens’s later novels was slow in reaching Norway, to the extent that it did so at all. Here, his early works seem to have retained their preeminence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as witnessed for instance by the number of new translations and adaptations of, say, *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, compared to those of *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*.<sup>9</sup>

## Publishing History

The early publishing history of *Oliver Twist* is unusually complex, with the text being published in a number of different forms: as a serial in a monthly magazine, in three volumes, in one volume and in various collected editions. The process involved three different publishers, and Dickens made several revised versions of the text, the most thorough of these appearing almost ten years after the novel was first published.<sup>10</sup> *Oliver Twist* was Dickens’s second novel, and appeared as monthly instalments in the magazine *Bentley’s Miscellany* between February 1837 and April 1839. During this time Dickens completed the serialization of *The Pickwick Papers*, and started his third novel *Nicholas Nickleby*. Before the entire series had appeared, *Oliver Twist* was published in three volumes in book form in November 1838. The reception by reviewers was generally favourable, and one anonymous critic exclaimed that ‘[Dickens’s] powers of pathos, sadly touching rather than tearful, are great’.<sup>11</sup> However, *The Examiner* complained about the ‘lowness’ of *Oliver Twist*, and criticized the workhouse satire in particular for being vulgar and coarse.<sup>12</sup> Kathryn Chittick suggests that *The Examiner’s* attention to Dickens reflects the interest of John Forster, who was the magazine’s literary editor at that time. Though Dickens and Forster had not met at the time, they were later to become close friends.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Garis, ‘Review: Dickens Criticism’, *Victorian Studies*, 7 (1964), 375-386 (p. 375).

<sup>9</sup> A search in Bibsys, the Norwegian Library Catalogue, lists 25, 26, 8 and 3 entries respectively for the four novels. Although by no means an accurate representation of the popularity of these books, the figures do give some impression of the different level of interest in the early and late works respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Tillotson, ‘Introduction’, in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. xv-xlix (p. xv).

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous review, *The Spectator*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1838, quoted in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 401-402 (p. 401).

<sup>12</sup> Kathryn Chittick, *Dickens and the 1830s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 75.

Several editions, which were really reprints, appeared in the next few years. In 1841 a 'Third Edition' appeared, for which Dickens wrote a new preface. In it, he defended his work against the critics and reviewers who had accused him of glorifying crime in his portrayal of criminals such as Fagin and Sikes. *Oliver Twist* should not be classified as a Newgate novel, Dickens rightly felt. A new, revised edition was published in 1846 'with revisions of a kind and extent unparalleled in any other of Dickens's novels'.<sup>13</sup> This version, published both in ten monthly numbers and in a one-volume edition, was popular and sold well. It is frequently used as copy-text for new editions of *Oliver Twist*, such as the Norton Critical edition.

Dickens's relationship with his publishers during the period of *Oliver Twist*'s creation was strained. Dickens had taken on too much work, and struggled to meet the demands of his various employers. As his work grew in popularity, Dickens felt that he should be allowed a greater share in the profits made by his publishers. After many rounds of negotiation, in which he threatened to leave altogether, Dickens finally succeeded; his relationship with Bentley had suffered a blow, however. The latter responded by paying Dickens less if his instalments of *Oliver Twist* were shorter, even by half a page, than the sixteen pages they had agreed upon.<sup>14</sup> Dickens broke completely with Bentley after the first edition of *Oliver Twist* had appeared, and resigned as editor of *Bentley's Miscellany* because he felt that Bentley interfered too much with his editorial policy.<sup>15</sup>

Dickens's dealings with George Cruikshank, who illustrated *Oliver Twist*, were similarly tense. J. Hillis Miller claims that 'it is true that Dickens kept the upper hand with his "illustrious" illustrator, rejected plates of which he disapproved, and often specified in detail what should be illustrated. At the same time, it is evident that he wrote *Oliver Twist* in order that it might be illustrated by Cruikshank'.<sup>16</sup> Cruikshank later claimed that the idea for the serial – an orphaned boy among London thieves – had been his own, but this notion has been rejected as unlikely by critics.<sup>17</sup> Bentley and Cruikshank were not the only sources of vexation for Dickens; he later had to battle a host of unauthorized adaptations of the work as *Oliver Twist* grew in popularity.

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<sup>13</sup> Tillotson, p. xxviii.

<sup>14</sup> Fred Kaplan, 'The Creation of *Oliver Twist*', in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 552-556 (p. 553).

<sup>15</sup> Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and His Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'The Fiction of Realism: *Sketches by Boz*, *Oliver Twist*, and Cruikshank's Illustrations', in *Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank*, ed. by J. Hillis Miller and David Borowitz (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1971), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Kaplan, p. 554; Frederic G. Kitton, *Dickens and his illustrators* (London: George Redway, 1899), pp. 17-24.

## Dickens and Adaptation

It is probable that nothing will ever root out from among the common people an innate love they have for dramatic entertainment in some form or other. It would be a very doubtful benefit to society, we think, if it could be rooted out.<sup>18</sup>

This quotation by Dickens is taken from the essay 'The Amusements of the People', published in his own magazine *Household Words*. It explains why Paul Schlicke would later write of Dickens that 'In the early days of his career, at the very outset of the Victorian era, the amusements of the people were under attack from many directions, and Dickens, the great popular entertainer, was their champion'.<sup>19</sup> Dickens thought that instead of 'rooting it out', popular entertainment should rather be improved, and in many ways, his own works resulted from this wish. Given his enthusiasm for public amusement, it is not surprising that Dickens's own works were adapted for the stage.

Rivalled only by *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist* is one of the most frequently dramatized of Dickens's novels, and the first stage adaptations appeared before it had completed its serial run in *Bentley's Miscellany*. Though they were not all received favourably, these early productions attest to the novel's enthusiastic readership and widespread circulation.<sup>20</sup> The 1838 adaptation by George Almar became particularly popular, but Dickens himself was not as convinced: 'according to Forster, "in the middle of the first scene he laid himself down upon the floor in a corner of the box and never rose from it until the last drop-scene fell"'.<sup>21</sup> As Dickens did not have the copyright to his own work, his reaction might have more to do with the fact that he was not paid by the adapters, than with his sense of artistic integrity. Theatrical versions of the novel continued to be staged, however, and 'by 1850 plays from *Oliver Twist* had graced at least forty-two stages on both sides of the Atlantic'.<sup>22</sup> Since then, *Oliver Twist* has been made into numerous films, TV series, stage adaptations and a highly successful musical.

What makes *Oliver Twist* such ripe material for adaptation? One answer might be found in the self-consciously theatrical nature of the novel, as made explicit by the narrator in

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Amusements of the People', first published in *Household Words*, 30 March 1850. Reprinted in *The Amusements of the People' and Other Papers: Reports, Essays and Reviews 1834-1851*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J.M. Dent, 1994), p. 180.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Schlicke, *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Tillotson, p. xxi.

<sup>21</sup> Regina Barreca, "'The Mimic Life of the Theatre': The 1838 Adaptation of *Oliver Twist*", in *Dramatic Dickens*, ed. by Carol Hanbery MacKey (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 87-95 (p. 87).

<sup>22</sup> H. Philip Bolton, *Dickens Dramatized* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1987), p. 105.

the opening paragraphs of chapter XVII: 'It is the custom on the stage: in all good, murderous melodramas: to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alteration, as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky, well-cured bacon'.<sup>23</sup> There has always been a strong link between Dickens's fiction and the theatre. As a young man, Dickens himself wanted to become an actor, and he kept his enthusiasm for the stage. Robert Garis links Dickens's theatricality to the comedy: 'anyone who opens one of Dickens' novels, then, is prepared to enter a "theatre" and to cooperate with the "theatrical mode" because he knows that he is going to find "humorous" writing soon'.<sup>24</sup> Linda Hutcheon points out that melodramatic stories are often adapted in the form of opera and musical dramas, where music can reinforce the tension of the text.<sup>25</sup> According to George J. Worth,

It is one thing to say that Dickens is dramatic or even theatrical as a writer of prose fiction: this we are prepared to accept, and even to praise [...] but it is quite another thing to say, dismissively, that Dickens is melodramatic, as scores of critics have done during the past 140 years.<sup>26</sup>

*Oliver Twist* is highly sentimental and melodramatic, and perhaps that is why it has been so successful as a musical.

Dickens himself later turned out to be a successful adapter of his own works, as demonstrated by the hugely popular public readings. These adaptations were given greater authority in that here, the author himself presented his own, new version of a work. According to Michael Andrews 'it was not only a form of interpretation: it was an act of recuperation in the face of diaspora. [...] Up there on his Reading platform, the author himself came to retrieve his texts from their dispersal among thousands of readers'.<sup>27</sup> The implications of having the author interpret his own works were many. There was always the danger, as with any adaptation, that readers would be disappointed because they had imagined the characters differently. Impressions were influenced by various stage performances, as readers of Dickens today may be influenced by Roman Polanski's 2005 film *Oliver Twist*, or the BBC television drama shown in 2008.

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<sup>23</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Garis, *The Dickens Theatre: A Reassessment of the Novels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> George J. Worth, *Dickensian Melodrama: A Reading of the Novels* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Andrews, *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 230.



During the 1860s, fiction and drama had become increasingly preoccupied with the sensational. Among the most famous sensation novels were *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* and *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Braddon.<sup>28</sup> 'Sikes and Nancy' was Dickens's response to this new genre, and he first performed the piece publicly on 5 January 1869, as part of his Farewell reading tour. His re-enactment of the vicious murder, which differed greatly in tone from that of his other readings, was to become his most famous performance. Philip Collins asserts that 'probably no episode in Victorian fiction has had such a stormy theatrical history', referring to the fact that dramatizations of *Oliver Twist* were banned by the Lord Chamberlain, the theatre censor, 'because of the violence of audiences' reaction to the murder scene'.<sup>29</sup> For Dickens, too, the performance had a harrowing effect; he became obsessed with performing 'Sikes and Nancy' and persisted in this, against the advice of his friends and his doctor.<sup>30</sup>

## Cultural Translation and Adaptation

In their seminal work *Constructing Cultures*, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere contend that translation studies have taken a 'cultural turn' by recognizing that translations are always part of a larger context.<sup>31</sup> Where earlier theories of translation had focused on questions of word-to-word equivalence and what constitutes a good or bad translation, Bassnett and Lefevere defined translation as a form of cultural interaction. Bassnett and Lefevere argue that 'a comparison of original and translation can [...] give the researcher something like a synchronic snapshot of many features of a given culture at a given time'.<sup>32</sup> Linda Hutcheon relates this newer sense of translation to adaptation theory, and notes that 'just as there is no such thing as literal translation there can be no literal adaptation'.<sup>33</sup> Translation and adaptation obviously have much in common. Hutcheon defines an adaptation in the following way: 'an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; an extended intertextual engagement with the

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<sup>28</sup> Andrews, p. 92; J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 602.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Collins, *Charles Dickens: The Public Readings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 466.

<sup>30</sup> Collins, p. 470; Kaplan, p. 556.

<sup>31</sup> Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, Topics in Translation 11 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Bassnett, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Hutcheon, p. 16.

adapted work'.<sup>34</sup> Her definition covers the dual aspect of adaptation, which can refer to both a product and a process. It is possible to talk of degrees of adaptation, with more literal translations at one end of the scale, and adaptation proper at the other end. Children's versions of *Oliver Twist* would then be closer to adaptation proper than the longer, more 'faithful' versions.

It is important to keep in mind that 'translations are made to respond to the demands of a culture, and of various groups within that culture'.<sup>35</sup> Many of the Norwegian editions of *Oliver Twist* have responded to the perceived demands of a new audience: children. In her book on adaptations for children, *Hvem forteller?*, Kari Skjønberg lists the various motives which govern the adaptation of adult literature for children: 'an adaptation can be didactic, moralizing, protective, it can be done in order to make the work easier to read as pure entertainment, or it can be done for purely economic reasons to reach a large international market'.<sup>36</sup> These are all underlying factors the publication of Norwegian children's editions of *Oliver Twist*.

The various demands made on translations are related to the status of the translated or adapted text.<sup>37</sup> The many children's versions of *Oliver Twist* indicate that Dickens inhabits a different place in the collective mind of the Norwegian public from that he holds in the English-speaking world. Because children's literature is generally seen as a lesser and inferior genre, texts belonging to the genre are treated differently from texts intended for adults. For instance, Formo points out that although changes are made in translations for adults too, books for children are obviously transformed to a greater extent.<sup>38</sup> *Oliver Twist*, then, can be said to have an ambiguous status in Norway: on the one hand it is a canonized work by an esteemed author, but on the other hand translators have no qualms about changing Dickens's text to a point where it is no longer recognizable as a work of 'the Inimitable'. This mostly occurs when the novel is altered and adapted to suit the needs of young readers. There is a hierarchy of medium or genre at work here, and an adaptation can be 'perceived as "lowering" a story when transferring it to a less prestigious genre'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett, 'Introduction', in *Translation, History & Culture*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 1-13 (p. 7).

<sup>36</sup> Kari Skjønberg, *Hvem forteller?: Om adaptasjoner i barnelitteratur* (Oslo: Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1979), p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> Lefevere, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Formo, p. 180.

<sup>39</sup> Hutcheon, p. 3.

According to Bassnett and Lefevere, ‘what impacts most on members of a culture [...] is the “image” of a work of literature, not its “reality”, not the text that is still sacrosanct only in literature departments’.<sup>40</sup> On a similar note, Paul Davis has coined the term ‘culture-text’, which refers to the shared memory of a work. Referring to *A Christmas Carol*, Davis argues that it ‘can be said to have two texts, the one that Dickens wrote in 1843 and the one that we collectively remember’.<sup>41</sup> In much the same way, *Oliver Twist* exists as a culture-text, though it has not spawned as many rewritings and adaptations as the *Carol*. The famous scene in which Oliver asks for more food, for instance, has become a universal image of the child, of hunger, poverty, sweat-shops, and the social injustice of Victorian England in general. Davis goes on to remark that the text of the *Christmas Carol* is not sacred: it can be altered and new material can be added to it in an effort to improve or re-imagine the original. In this way, Davis notes, ‘each rewriting of the culture-text implies a new reading of Dickens’ text’, and studying the adaptations of a text becomes as important as studying the original text itself.<sup>42</sup> *Oliver Twist* has survived and thrived precisely through its ‘rewritings’. As Robert L. Patten notes, ‘the theatre rescued Dickens’s first novels from neglect far more than universities did’.<sup>43</sup>

The relationship between original and adaptation has traditionally been an unequal one, though attempts have been made to amend that view: ‘an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative - a work that is second without being secondary’.<sup>44</sup> There is a difference here between adaptations which transfer a work from one medium to another, like a film, and adaptations which operate within the same medium, in the manner of translation. The former acts as a supplement to the original, whereas the latter seeks to replace the original. According to Hutcheon, experiencing a work *as an adaptation* requires awareness of the original: ‘if we do not know that what we are experiencing actually *is* an adaptation or if we are not familiar with the particular work that it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work’.<sup>45</sup> Norwegian children are less likely than English-speaking children to be aware of Dickens’s original text, and will therefore experience an abridged translation of *Oliver Twist* as they would any other work. Indeed, very few of the editions for children mention the fact that they are abridged versions of the original text. Adults on the other hand, familiar at

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<sup>40</sup> Lefevere, pp. 9-10.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Davis, *The Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Davis, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Robert L. Patten, ‘From *Sketches* to *Nickleby*’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 16-33 (p. 25).

<sup>44</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 8-9.

<sup>45</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 120-121.

least with the name Charles Dickens, might experience the work differently. They would perhaps have encountered other adaptations, a film or a stage production, which would then influence their perception of the novel. Hutcheon points out that ‘a work is an adaptation of more than one specific text’, in that an adaptation often draws upon earlier adaptations in addition to the original work.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes the latter is not used at all, as when a Norwegian edition of *Oliver Twist* is based on an abridged Danish version of the text.

## Structure

The most productive approach to Dickens, according to Connor, is one which takes into account how Dickens’s excessiveness transcends the texts themselves.

Like the work of Shakespeare, Dickens’s work absconds from or is hijacked out of the safe and manageable condition of textual embodiment, leaking outwards into ideology and mythology, into cultural revision, adaptation and reappropriation. The fact that Dickens himself was the first entrepreneur in the Dickens industry [...] makes it hard to see this process simply as the corruption of the market-place violating the original integrity of the aesthetic work.<sup>47</sup>

There is indeed a ‘Dickens industry’, and it has spread far beyond the British and English-speaking world. This thesis will attempt, through a study of the reception of *Oliver Twist*, to account for a small part of that industry. If there are, as Rosemarie Bodenheimer has suggested, a ‘multitude of Dickenses’, then there are certainly a multitude of Norwegian *Oliver Twists* too, and these have never been studied collectively before.<sup>48</sup> As an author, Dickens is remarkable in that he is as highly regarded within academia as he is cherished in popular culture.<sup>49</sup> Only a few canonical English-language authors have achieved such a unique status, among them Shakespeare, Mark Twain and Jane Austen. Dickens’s texts have proven themselves fertile ground for a number of theoretical approaches, such as deconstruction, psychoanalysis and feminism, to name just a few. However, within Dickens’s oeuvre, *Oliver Twist* does not enjoy the same high status as for instance *Great Expectations*

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<sup>46</sup> Hutcheon, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Connor, pp. 30-31.

<sup>48</sup> Rosemarie Bodenheimer, ‘Dickens and the Writing of a Life’, in *Charles Dickens Studies*, ed. by John Bowen and Robert L. Patten (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 48-68 (p. 49).

<sup>49</sup> John O. Jordan, ‘Preface’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. xix-xxi (p. xix).

and the other late novels. The enormous popularity of the novel among the general audience nevertheless makes up for the relative lack of academic interest.

The original context in which *Oliver Twist* was written, published and read is gone, and cannot be recreated. In Hans Robert Jauss's words:

To believe that it is possible to gain access to the alien horizon of the past simply by leaving out one's own horizon of the present is to fail to recognize that subjective criteria, such as choice, perspective, and evaluation, have been introduced into a supposedly objective reconstruction of the past.<sup>50</sup>

However, the new context in which these texts are published helps to shape their reception. The main body of this thesis is divided into three parts. In chapter one, I will examine the unabridged editions of *Oliver Twist*, whose audience is likely to be adults, and place them in their historical context. Here I will also analyse and compare the different translations in order to reveal the strategies employed by the translators. The children's versions will be discussed in a similar manner in chapter two, with a section containing bibliographical information and historical background followed by textual analysis. My stance is descriptive rather than normative here; I do not attempt to judge whether these are 'good' or 'bad' translations. The fact that children's literature has been, and to some degree still is, considered an inferior genre should not influence a discussion of these books as independent works. In chapter three I will examine the afterlife of *Oliver Twist* outside the books, in the form of television serials, films, musicals and adaptations in other media. The chapter starts with a brief section revisiting some of the general points made about adaptation theory in the introduction, but links them more directly to the Norwegian reception.

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<sup>50</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, 'The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding', in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. by James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 7-28 (p. 8).



# Chapter 1: The Unabridged Editions

## Introduction: (In)visible Translators

A translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.<sup>1</sup>

Though Walter Benjamin's approach to translation is highly philosophical and tends towards abstraction, I think he makes a convincing point in the above quotation: that a work lives on partly through its translations. While Dickens, and *Oliver Twist*, is read in the original in Norway, it is through translations that most people encounter the captivating world of Fagin and his band of thieves. This chapter will deal with the unabridged Norwegian translations of *Oliver Twist*, whose main audience were adults. On the most basic level, my analysis seeks to describe how the different translators approach and deal with the original text, and demonstrate whether they follow more or less the same pattern of translation or if there are significant differences between the texts. Taking this further, and bearing in mind the cultural aspect of translation, I believe the Norwegian editions can provide information about more general issues in addition to specific, text-related matters. The choices made by a translator can for instance reveal a particular attitude towards translation, Dickens or classics in general. Furthermore, each edition may give some insight into the time in which it was published.

I use Lawrence Venuti's terms 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' throughout to describe the translated texts, and will therefore continue by giving a brief presentation of his theories. As indicated by the title of his influential and controversial book, *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti draws attention to the fact that translators are invisible, meaning that their work is seldom recognized in its own right. The dominant trend of fluent translation dictates that a translation must never draw attention to itself as such; it must give the appearance of transparency. Based on Friedrich Schleiermacher's distinction between a practice which moves the reader towards the author and one which does the opposite, Venuti distinguishes between two approaches to translation: a domesticating practice which involves 'an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values' or a foreignizing

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', trans. by Harry Zohn, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 75-85 (p. 76).

practice which puts ‘an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text’.<sup>2</sup> A fluent translation is therefore a domesticating translation, one which does not seem foreign. He further states that ‘the terms “domestication” and “foreignization” indicate fundamentally *ethical* attitudes towards a foreign text and culture, ethical effects produced by the choice of a text for translation and by the strategy devised to translate it’.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the terms do not simply denote a type of translation, or translating devices used within the text, but go beyond that, considering the text as a whole and its impact on the receiving culture. Reading a translation as a translation involves recognising the difference between the foreign past and the receiving present: in this case Victorian England and 20<sup>th</sup> century Norway. Of course, each translation will always contain something of both worlds; it will position itself somewhere on a scale from domestication to foreignization. My comparative analysis is an attempt to demonstrate this, but first I will describe each edition, emphasizing the historical context in which it was published.

### **‘It would be a much better thing to be a bookseller’**

#### **Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag**

The first Norwegian translation of *Oliver Twist*, entitled *Oliver Twist: En Fortælling*, was published in 1880 by Cammermeyer Forlag as part of the series ‘Miniaturbibliothek for Romanlæsning’. The book was printed in two volumes, 358 and 426 pages long respectively. There is no information about the translator. The books are presented as ‘Separataftryk af Folkebladet’, something which indicates that they were first published in a magazine.

This edition was published forty years after the appearance of the first Danish translation. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Norway and Denmark shared a common book market, and Norwegian readers read novels in Danish and German, including Dickens’s novels. The most influential Danish translations were the Moltke editions, named after their translator L. Moltke. They were frequently reprinted throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are often referred to as ‘the classic Danish Dickens translations’. Though objections were raised concerning Moltke’s use of archaic language, he is still considered a pioneer in the field of Dickens translation. Jørgen Erik Nilsen points out that Moltke’s translations were unabridged, and that the translator strove to be as faithful to the original text

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Venuti, p. 19.



as possible, even including dedications and forewords.<sup>4</sup> From the mid-1860s translations into Norwegian of new foreign titles became more common, and a decade later, Norwegian translations were published simultaneously with the Danish ones, some even before.<sup>5</sup>

Albert Cammermeyer started out as a bookseller in 1867, and his firm soon became one of the most successful in the business. By 1870 his shop was the largest of its kind in Scandinavia, with a broad selection of titles. Cammermeyer brought the same spirit of innovation and ambition to the Norwegian publishing industry. The 1880s are considered the golden age of Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, and in this period it published a total of 738 titles, more than any other publisher. Among these were books covering a wide range of topics, from Norwegian and translated fiction to textbooks, maps and travel literature. Cammermeyer also published magazines, such as *Norsk Familjeblad* (1879-82) and *Folkebladet* (1880-86). Above all, Cammermeyer strove to strengthen the Norwegian book market and give it a competitive edge. He introduced more modern sales techniques and new practices such as the use of professional readers and consultants. Towards the end of the century, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag was drawn into competition with the other leading Norwegian publisher, Aschehoug, and by 1900 the latter emerged victorious.<sup>6</sup>

### Nasjonalforlaget

In 1935, fifty-five years after the first Norwegian edition of *Oliver Twist* appeared on Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, Nasjonalforlaget published another version of the novel. This edition was reprinted in 1962. The translator, Henrik Rytter (1877-1950), translated a number of Dickens's novels during the 1930s. He is best known for his translations of Shakespeare's plays into New Norwegian, in addition to translations of Dante and the Decameron. Although some of his translations were criticized for their tendency to use outdated words and expressions, they were nevertheless used as a basis for later translations. Rytter was also an author in his own right, and published several plays and works of poetry, but he did not gain a very large readership. In Erik Egeberg's words, 'it would not be unfair to assume that Rytter

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<sup>4</sup> Jørgen Erik Nilsen, *Dickens i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2009), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Norsk Barnelitteraturhistorie*, ed. by Tone Birkeland, Gunvor Risa and Karin Beate Vold, 2nd edn (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2005), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Egil Tveterås, 'Albert Cammermeyer – utdypning (NBL-artikkel)', *Store Norske Leksikon*, [http://snl.no/nbl/biografi/Albert\\_Cammermeyer/utdypning](http://snl.no/nbl/biografi/Albert_Cammermeyer/utdypning) [accessed 16 April 2011]; Harald L. Tveterås, *Den norske bokhandels historie*, 4 vols (Oslo: J.W. Cappelens Forlag, 1950-1996), III (1986), pp. 285-300; Egil Tveterås and Harald L. Tveterås, *Den norske bokhandels historie*, 4 vols (Oslo: J.W. Cappelens Forlag, 1950-1996), IV (1996), pp. 30-31.

reached a much larger audience with [his] translations, than with his own work'.<sup>7</sup> In 1937, two years after translating *Oliver Twist*, Rytter published a book called *Norden har ordet*, which, according to Ronny Spaans, was a combative call to arms against Nazism, in which he describes how the Nazis tried to appropriate Norse mythology for their own ideological purposes. Spaans is careful to point out that Rytter contrasts the Nazi form of nationalism with that of the New Norwegian movement, of which he himself was a participant, and which, again in Spaans's words, was fundamentally democratic and concerned with the Norwegian national character.<sup>8</sup> Spaans's article is apologetic in nature, and it could be argued that there were links between the New Norwegian movement and the German nationalism as represented by the Völkisch movement.

Rytter participated actively in the political debates of the day, and while he started out as a relatively moderate liberal, his political views rapidly became more radical, especially after the Russian revolution in 1917. He was inspired by the socialist movement, which encouraged farmers and workers to unite against capitalism and oppression.<sup>9</sup> In 1945, the Norwegian Communist Party commissioned Rytter to write their political manifesto in a prose version which would appeal to the general public. The leader of the party, Peder Furubotn, was pleased with the result, and it was printed on the front page of the party's newspaper, *Friheten*, on 29 September 1945.<sup>10</sup> As a sort of literary middleman, Rytter was meant to represent the true Norwegian spirit, and *Friheten* thus reflected the surge of nationalistic feeling which arose after the war had ended.

Nasjonalforlaget, established in 1928 by Ernst G. Mortensen, was the first Norwegian publishing house to offer multi-volume series of translated works by authors such as Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo. This new trend replaced the older model of subscription, where the subscribers were responsible for binding the books themselves, but buyers were still able to pay for one book at a time. The series were at first sold directly through the publisher, but Nasjonalforlaget soon began working with different book dealers to

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<sup>7</sup> Erik Egeberg, 'Oversettelser mellom middelalderen og 2. verdenskrig', in *Brobyggere: Oversettelser til norsk fra middelalderen til i dag*, ed. by Magnus Rindal, Erik Egeberg and Tone Formo (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998), pp. 51-106 (p. 66).

<sup>8</sup> Ronny Spaans, 'Ein stridsmann tek ordet: Henrik Rytter og nordisk folkeånd', in *Skrift og Strid: Essay om Henrik Rytter*, ed. by Sindre Hovdenakk og Leif Høgghaug (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2011), pp. 205-224.

<sup>9</sup> Per Hovdenakk, 'Henrik Rytter – utdypning (NBL-artikkel)', *Store Norske Leksikon*, [http://www.sn�.no/nbl\\_biografi/Henrik\\_Rytter/utdypning](http://www.sn�.no/nbl_biografi/Henrik_Rytter/utdypning) [accessed 26.01.2011]

<sup>10</sup> Sindre Hovdenakk, 'Ein diktar tek parti', in *Skrift og Strid: Essay om Henrik Rytter*, ed. by Sindre Hovdenakk og Leif Høgghaug (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2011), pp. 245-247.

distribute their works. The 'Samlede verker' (complete works) and similar series became hugely popular, and other publishing houses soon followed their example.<sup>11</sup>

### Dreyers Forlag

The next edition of *Oliver Twist*, excluding the children's versions, was published by Dreyers Forlag in 1949. It was translated by Eivind Hauge, and included cover art by Fredrik Matheson, in addition to a frontispiece portrait of Charles Dickens by Marcel Maurel. There were also fifteen full-page photographs from David Lean's film version of *Oliver Twist*, which had appeared in the previous year. Another edition of the book published the same year, though otherwise identical, replaced the photographs with sixteen of Cruikshank's original illustrations. The portrait of Dickens was replaced by the Cruikshank drawing showing Oliver being captured by Sikes and Nancy. This edition was reprinted in 1968. Another edition using Hauge's translation was published in 1969 by Samlerens Bokklubb.

Dreyers Forlag was founded in Oslo in 1942 by Alf Larsen and Barthold Butenschøn, and soon became known for its ambitious publishing plans and focus on quality.<sup>12</sup> Larsen was one of the leading figures within the anthroposophy movement, and was seen as a controversial figure in the public debate.<sup>13</sup> During the 1930s, Larsen published an intellectual journal, *Janus*, in which he expressed his anti-materialistic stance. Butenschøn admired the magazine and approached Larsen with the idea of establishing a publishing house.<sup>14</sup> Their vision for Dreyers Forlag was closely linked to Larsen's highly conservative or even reactionary political agenda. 'You might call it an extension of the *Janus* impulse' writes Butenschøn in Dreyers Forlag's main catalogue.<sup>15</sup> A large number of the titles published by Dreyers Forlag explored topics within art and culture, but to ensure financial stability they also published crossword books and crime fiction, most notably the Maigret novels by Georges Simenon. Their edition of *Oliver Twist* was part of a series of Dickens novels published in ten volumes, advertised under the slogan 'Dickens for everyone!'<sup>16</sup> One might ask what kind of Dickens this publisher presented to their readers. Given the conservative

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<sup>11</sup> Egeberg, p. 66; Tveterås, (1996), p. 252, 302.

<sup>12</sup> Tveterås, (1996) p. 380.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Lotherington, 'Alf Larsen – utdypning (NBL-artikkel)', *Store Norske Leksikon* [http://snl.no/nbl\\_biografi/Alf\\_Larsen/utdypning](http://snl.no/nbl_biografi/Alf_Larsen/utdypning) [accessed 17 April 2011].

<sup>14</sup> Egil Tveterås, 'Barthold A. Butenschøn – utdypning (NBL-artikkel)', *Store Norske Leksikon* [http://snl.no/nbl\\_biografi/Barthold\\_A\\_Butensch%C3%B8n/utdypning](http://snl.no/nbl_biografi/Barthold_A_Butensch%C3%B8n/utdypning) [accessed 17 April 2011].

<sup>15</sup> Barthold Butenschøn, 'Noen trekk fra Dreyers Forlags historie', in *Hovedkatalog 1942-1967* (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1967), pp. 129-135 (p. 134).

<sup>16</sup> 'Dickens i ti bind med originalillustrasjoner', *Verdens Gang*, 19 September 1950, p. 4.

sympathies of Larsen and Butenschøn, it was probably not the socially radical Dickens of *Hard Times*.

### **ForlagETT LibriArte**

The most recent unabridged edition of Dickens's novels was published by ForlagETT LibriArte in 1998, as part of a series based on the Dreyer translations of Dickens. This version included sixteen of the original illustrations by Cruikshank. Although Tryggve Norum is credited as the translator, the text is identical to the Hauge translation. Norum translated several Dickens novels for Dreyer Forlag in the 1950s, including *David Copperfield*, *The Pickwick Papers* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. It seems unlikely that he would have translated *Oliver Twist* only a few years after Hauge. The publishers must simply have made a mistake here I think, which tells us something about the (lack of) attention paid to the translator's work.

### **Domesticating Dickens**

I have chosen to focus mainly on the Nasjonalforlaget and the Dreyer translations, since these are the most readily available today, and the ones which seem to have had the greatest distribution. However, I have included examples from the Cammermeyer text for comparison. In addition to using Venuti's terms foreignization and domestication, I am also indebted to the theoretical vocabulary developed by Antoine Berman, who in his article 'The Trials of the Foreign' lists a number of 'deforming tendencies' of translation.<sup>17</sup> Among these are *rationalization*, which 'bears primarily on the syntactical structures of the original', including punctuation. Berman argues that such changes make 'the original pass from concrete to abstract'. He also introduces the terms *clarification* or *explicitation*, where the translator makes clearer what is vague in the original. Paraphrase and summary are examples of clarification. *Qualitative impoverishment* occurs when the translator replaces terms, expressions or figures in the original with less complex and meaningful equivalents. Berman also uses the term *quantitative impoverishment*, which simply refers to the lexical loss which often accompanies translation. He further identifies features like *the destruction of linguistic patternings* and *the destruction of expressions and idioms*, the former referring to changes in

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<sup>17</sup> Antoine Berman, 'The Trials of the Foreign', trans by. Lawrence Venuti, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 280.

sentence structure and the latter raising questions about the use of equivalent expressions in the target language. *The destruction of vernacular networks*, or *exoticization*, and *the effacement of the superimposition of languages* are especially relevant terms in the case of Dickens, who uses sociolects in all his novels. Exoticization occurs when the translator for instance uses a local dialect in place of a foreign vernacular. According to Berman, ‘an exoticization that turns the foreign from abroad into the foreign at home winds up merely ridiculing the original’.<sup>18</sup>

From the very beginning of the novel, the Norwegian translators of *Oliver Twist* encounter problems as they strive to bridge the gap between the original past and the translating present. The many English terms and titles belonging to a specific historical context do not always have an immediately recognizable Norwegian equivalent. Thus, the parish surgeon becomes ‘fattiglegen’ or ‘distriktslegen’; and the beadle is transformed into ‘opsynsmanden ved Fattighuset’, ‘fattigforstanderen’ and ‘fattigfuten’ in the Cammermeyer, Nasjonalforlaget and Dreyer editions respectively. Linguistically, these terms link their occupations directly to the poor and the workhouse, and have inevitably become examples of explicitation. In the Nasjonalforlaget and Dreyer editions ‘parish’ is translated into the Norwegian ‘kommune’, and parochial becomes ‘kommunal’, or ‘kommenal’ as pronounced by Mr. Bumble in Rytter’s translation. These terms do not denote any connection to the Church, as for instance ‘sogn’ does. Mr. Bumble calls himself ‘Sognets Tjæner’ in the Cammermeyer translation, but is here also referred to as ‘kommunebetjent’. Rytter and Hauge’s translations place less emphasis on the Church as a governing institution, thereby making Dickens’s attack on the hypocrisy of the Church into a general criticism of ‘the system’. Though ‘kommune’ was introduced as a geographical term early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is most commonly associated with the post-war welfare state. Moving from ‘sogn’ to ‘kommune’ makes the texts seem both more modern and more Norwegian.

In addition to specific terms, there are a variety of cultural references which situate the novel in a particular time and place, such as currency, measurements, and types of food. The Norwegian translations deal with these references in various ways, by keeping the original references intact, omitting them entirely, finding specific Norwegian equivalents or by translating them into a general concept. The latter is the case in the Cammermeyer edition, where gin is translated into the more general ‘brænnevin’, and Mrs Mann says ‘Det er Brændevin, Mr. Bumble, jeg vil ikke skuffe Dem’. Note also the use of the word ‘skuffe’

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<sup>18</sup> Berman, p. 286.

(disappoint), which could be read as an explicitation of the original version: 'It's gin. I'll not deceive you Mr. B. It's gin' (emphasis mine). Rytter felt the need to explain gin to his Norwegian readers, and has translated it into 'enebær-brennevin' (juniper liquor). The Dreyer translation uses the word gin without further explanation. The name of the medicine administered by Mrs. Mann, 'Daffy', would not be familiar to Norwegian readers, and has not made it into any of these translations.

Personal names and nicknames often carry meanings beyond mere identification of a character, and perhaps especially so in Dickens's work. One Norwegian translator of Dickens, Torstein Bugge Høverstad, feels that translation is needed in order to convey these impressions and qualities, that something would be lost if the names were left untranslated. In his translation of *A Christmas Carol*, therefore, Scrooge is called Knug and Marley is renamed Barflint, in an effort to recreate both the sound and the connotations of the original name.<sup>19</sup> This strategy is not used in the Norwegian translations of *Oliver Twist*, with the exception of a few nicknames. The Artful Dodger is referred to as Lurendrejer (The Trickster) in the Cammermeyer edition, Luringen in the Dreyer edition and Revefulingen (rev = fox, ful = cunning), sometimes just Reven or Fulingen, in the Nasjonalforlaget edition. The Norwegian words connote cunning, cleverness, or trickery, but otherwise have no relation to the English name. In another attempt to transfer the connotations of the original name, Toby Crackit is called Toby Brekkjern (crowbar) in the Dreyer edition, while the other translations retain his English name. When choosing whether or not to translate names, the translators are faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, doing so could help the reader understand more of the text, on the other hand, it could lead to confusion if the reader is already familiar with the original name. Considering the fact that the Norwegian translations each have their own versions of some names, say, the Dodger, the picture becomes even more complicated. A reader familiar with Rytter's 'Revefulingen' might not immediately recognize Hauge's 'Luringen' and vice versa.

As an example of how the different translations deal with the challenge posed by the use of cockney slang in the original text, I will analyse parts of the episode in which Oliver meets the Artful Dodger for the first time. This is how the event appears in the original text:

'Hullo, my covey, what's the row?' said this strange young gentleman to Oliver.

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<sup>19</sup> Torstein Bugge Høverstad, 'Tingenes rette navn – på norsk', *Dagbladet*, 8 January 2000, p. 50. See also Charles Dickens, *Et julekvad*, trans by. Torstein Bugge Høverstad (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1990).

‘I am very hungry and tired,’ replied Oliver: the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. ‘I have walked a long way. I have been walking for seven days.’  
 ‘Walking for sivin days!’ said the young gentleman. ‘Oh, I see. Beak’s order, eh? But,’ he added, noticing Oliver’s look of surprise, ‘I suppose you don’t know what a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on.’  
 Oliver mildly replied, that he had always heard a bird’s mouth described by the term in question. ‘My eyes, how green!’ exclaimed the young gentleman. ‘Why, a beak’s a madgst’rate; and when you walk by a beak’s order, it’s not straight forerd, but always agoing up, and nivir acoming down agin. Was you never on the mill?’  
 ‘What mill?’ inquired Oliver.  
 ‘What mill!—why, *the* mill—the mill as takes up so little room that it’ll work inside a Stone Jug; and always goes better when the wind’s low with people, than when it’s high: acos then they can’t get workmen. But come,’ said the young gentleman; ‘you want grub, and you shall have it. I’m at low-water-mark myself—only one bob and a magpie; but *as* far *as* it goes, I’ll fork out and stump. Up with you on your pins. There! Now then! Morrice!’ (62-63)

The same episode is conveyed in this way in the Cammermeyer edition:

‘Holla, min Gut, hvad er ivejen?’ sagde den besynderlige unge Herre til Oliver.  
 ‘Jeg er meget sulten og træt’, svarede Oliver med Taarer i Øjnene. ‘Jeg har gaat lang Vej. Jeg har gaat i de sidste syv Dager.’  
 ‘Gaat i syv Dager!’ sagde den unge Herre. ‘Ja, jeg forstaar. Næbs Ordre, hvad? Men?’ tillagde han ved Synet af Olivers overraskede Mine, ‘du ved kanske ikke, hva et Næb er, min fine Fyr.’  
 Oliver svarede mildt, at han altid havde hørt en Fugls Mund betegnet med det omtalte Ord.  
 ‘Naa, hvor grøn!’ raabte den unge Herre. ‘Et Næb vil sige en Dommer, og naar du gaar efter hans Ordre, gaar det ikke fremad, men altid op og aldrig ned igjen. Har du aldrig været i Møllen?’  
 ‘Hvilken Mølle?’ spurgte Oliver.  
 ‘Hvilken Mølle! —Trædemøllen— den Mølle, som optager saa liden Plads, at den kan arbejde i et lidet pent Tugthus, og alltid gaar bedst, naar Folk er i Vinden, fordi de ikke kan blive Arbejdere, naar de ikke er i Vinden. Men kom’, sagde den unge Herre; ‘du behøver Mad, og det skal du faa. Det er Ebbe hos mig ogsaa — bare 12 ½ Pence; men saa langt det rækker, skal jeg punge ud og betale. Op med dig. Saa! Naa da! Saa afsted!’<sup>21</sup>

The Rytter translation has translated this passage in the following way:

‘Hallo, ungen min, hva’ er tiss?’ sa den unge kavaléren til Oliver.  
 ‘Jeg er svært svolten og trett’ svarte Oliver, tårerne stod ham i øinene da han sa det.  
 ‘Jeg har gått en lang vei. Jeg har gått og gått i syv dager.’

<sup>21</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 2 vols (Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, 1880), I, pp. 99-100.

‘Gått i syv dager!’ sa den unge kavaléren. ‘Nå, jeg forstår. Ordre fra ”nebbet”, he? Nå,’ la han til, han så Olivers forundrede blikk, ‘jeg tenker du vet ’ke hva’ “nebbet” er for en, gilde kam-me-rat.’

Oliver svarte mildt at han alltid hadde hørt munnstykket på en fugl bli nevnt sånn.

‘Jøss for en grønnskolling!’ ropte den unge kavaléren. ‘Nå, “nebbet” er pol’tidommer’n; og går du efter ordre fra “nebbet”, så går du ’ke blindt fram, men op og op heile ti’a, og kommer aldri ne’att. Har du aldri vært på mølla?’

‘Hvad for mølle?’ spurte Oliver.

‘Hvad for mølle? Nå, møllen vel – møllen som tar så liten plass at hu greier svingen inni steinmugga, og går be’re når folk taper været enn når de drar været lett; for da kan de’ke få arbeidsfolk. Men, hør nå,’ sa den unge kavaléren; ‘du trenger tel fôr, og du ska’ få det. Jeg er på lavvannsmerket sjøl også –bare en blank en og en slant –men så langt det rekker ska’ jeg punge ut. Op på pipestilkene dine! Så! Så ja! Pigg i vei!’<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the Dreyer edition has chosen this solution:

–Hallo kompis. Å er’e for noe gærnt med deg? Spurte denne merkelige unge kavaleren.

–Jeg er så trøtt og sulten, svarte Oliver med tårer i øynene. –Jeg har gått så langt. Jeg har gått i syv dager.

–Gått i syv dager! sa den unge herre. –Å, jeg forstår. Etter høyere ordre, hm? –Det ser forresten ikke ut som du skjønner hva jeg mener? la han til da han så Olivers forundrede uttrykk. Og det måtte Oliver spakt innrømme.

–Makan til grønnskolling! ropte den unge herren. –Du må da fatte og begripe at når jeg sier ”på høyere ordre” så mener jeg på dommerens. Har du aldri vært innafor, du da småen? Men du ser ut som du trenger foring, så det må du ha først. Jeg er nokså blakk sjæl, jeg har bare en bob og seks, men jeg river i så langt det rekker. Så opp på skjekene dine og come along.<sup>23</sup>

As these excerpts show, the Dreyer translation is shorter than both the original text and the other translations, which are of similar length. There are two reasons for this: Hauge has left out the part of the conversation referring to the treadmill, and he uses fewer words to describe the remaining action and dialogue. He often summarizes instead of translating directly: ‘med tårer i øynene’ instead of ‘the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke’. On the whole, Hauge leaves out much more than Rytter, as evidenced by the number of pages in the two editions: 384 and 480 pages respectively. Even when variations in format and typesetting are taken into account, the difference is marked. This is surprising considering that the publisher’s note in the Dreyer edition claims that ‘this edition is the first unabridged translation into Norwegian’. Hauge’s translation is on the whole more domesticating and, through rationalization, tends to make the text easier to understand, with simpler sentence structures and few unfamiliar words.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter (Oslo: Nasjonalforlaget, 1935), p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1949), p. 59.



Quite unexpectedly then, the most recent translation is the more abridged, while the older, more dated translations are actually more complete and faithful.

There are at least two further points of particular interest here: the way the translations deal with the reference to the treadmill and the cockney slang of the original text. Hauge has simply chosen to omit the part of the conversation between Oliver and the Dodger concerning the treadmill, perhaps because he felt that this particular form of punishment would be too unfamiliar for Norwegian readers in the 1950s. The translation by Rytter follows the original more closely. The reference to the treadmill is kept intact, with no attempt to explain the mill (mølla) and the Stone Jug (steinmugga) to the audience. The Cammermeyer edition explains the nature of the mill by using the word 'tredemølle' (treadmill), and refers to the Stone Jug simply as 'Tugthus' (workhouse), dropping the slang. However, both translations have trouble with the Dodger's explanation of why the mill 'goes better when the wind's low with people, than when it's high'. This must mean that when times are hard, there are more workmen in the workhouse because they do not have an income, and therefore the mill 'goes better'. The translators seem to have missed this point, and their translations as a consequence make little sense.

Both translations attempt to reproduce Jack Dawkins' distinct speech patterns, but to varying degrees. Rytter goes further than Hauge and the Cammermeyer translation, using more contractions and other non-standard language, thus adhering more closely to the original. He translates English slang words directly, instead of opting for equivalent Norwegian terms and expressions, for example using 'nebbet' in place of 'beak', which is slang for magistrate. It is unlikely that the word was used in the same way in Norwegian at the time of translation: a search in Norwegian dictionaries does not reveal any examples of the word used in reference to judge.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, 'low-water-mark', becomes lavvannsmerket, a direct translation, whereas Hauge translates it into 'blakk', meaning simply 'broke' in standard Norwegian. The Cammermeyer translation falls somewhere in the middle, with 'ebbe', which still contains the reference to tides, but is further from the original than Rytter. Hauge's Dodger speaks a more muted language, which differs from that of Oliver mainly in vocabulary, less in sentence construction and pronunciation. However, Hauge does include English words like 'bob', which is found in the original, and 'come along', which is not. This could be an attempt to include Norwegian slang, making the Dodger sound more colloquial, or it could be interpreted as a foreignizing element. According to Berman, 'translation can

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ordnett.no/ordbok.html> [accessed 19 April 2011].

occur only between “cultivated” languages’; consequently any attempt to translate a foreign vernacular into a local vernacular will fail.<sup>26</sup> I think his view is too pessimistic; the alternative would be to render all types of speech in the same language, standard Norwegian, as some of the children’s versions do.

Another, more structural, form of rationalization occurs in chapter XII of the Dreyer edition. In the original text, the title of the chapter runs as follows: ‘In which Oliver is taken better care of, than he ever was before. And in which the Narrative reverts to the merry old Gentleman and his youthful Friends’. The Norwegian chapter title conveys the same information, but the Norwegian narrative never actually reverts to Fagin in this chapter, which ends with the scene where Oliver looks at the painting of the young lady who resembles him so much. The plot returns to the Dodger and Charley in chapter XIII, making the description (epithet) of chapter XII misleading.

In the Dreyer edition, sentences and sometimes whole paragraphs are omitted, and the omissions recur more often towards the end of the narrative. In the first part of the novel, the translator frequently leaves out the names of streets and areas, such as the description of the route taken by Oliver and the Dodger into London:

As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o’clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St. John’s road; struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler’s Wells Theatre; through Exmouth-street and Coppice-row; down the little court by the side of the workhouse; across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-Hole; thence into Little Saffron-hill; and so into Saffron-hill the Great: along which, the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace: directing Oliver to follow close at his heels. (64)

Hauge simply summarizes the paragraph: ‘John Dawkins hadde liten lyst til å dra inn i London før det var blitt mørkt, så klokken var nesten elleve da de kom til bommen ved Islington. Oliver hadde nok å gjøre med å holde tritt med kameraten’.<sup>28</sup> Presumably the translator felt that details concerning the route into London would be unfamiliar to the readers and not important to the plot, and therefore left them out.

The Cammermeyer edition translates the passage much more faithfully:

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<sup>26</sup> Berman, p. 286.

<sup>28</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge, p. 61.

Da Jack Dawkins ikke vilde, at de skulde gaa ind i London, før det blev mørkt, var Klokken næsten elleve før de naade Bommen ved Islington. De gikk fra „Engelen” ind i St. Johns Gade, ned det lille Stræde, som ender ved Sadlers Wells Theatret, gennem Exmouthgaden og Coppicevejen nedefter den lille Gade ved Siden af Fattighuset, over den Klassiske Jordbund, som engang bar Navnet Hockley-in-the-Hole; derfra ind i lille Saffron-hill; Lurendrejerer ilede raskt afsted og bød Oliver holde sig i Hælene paa ham.<sup>29</sup>

The names of streets and places are for the most part kept intact, except for the Angel, which is translated into ‘Engelen’, without a specification of what it exactly is. The Angel was an inn located on the Great North Road. Rytter also includes the description, but has chosen a domesticating approach, using Norwegian words for most of the street names, such as ‘Krattveien’ for Coppice-row and so on:

Jack Dawkins nektet å vandre inn i London før kvelden kom; derfor var klokken næsten elleve da de nådde tollbommen ved Islington. De skrådde fra Hjørnet og inn på St. Johns vei; tok så den trange gaten som ender ved Hestebrønn-teatret, så gjennom Exmouthgaten og Krattveien, over den vesle plassen attmed fattighuset, så tvers over den klassiske grunnen som engang bar navnet «Rôtball-hôla»; derfra inn i Vesle Safranhaugen; og så inn i Store Safranhaugen; her rente Fulingen i vei med stor fart og gav Oliver ordre til å følge ham hakk i hæl.<sup>30</sup>

Note the translation of the Angel into ‘Hjørnet’ (the corner) here. Rytter seems to have thought of ‘angle’ instead of ‘angel’. He has clearly made a mistake when translating Sadler’s Wells Theatre into ‘Hestebrønn-teatret’ (Horsewell Theatre), the name of the theatre has nothing to do with horses, but was named after its founder, Mr. Dick Sadler.<sup>31</sup> The two translations use different approaches here: Dreyer excludes references which situate the events in their original context, while the Nasjonalforlaget translation, adopting a more domesticating approach, tries to make these references into something more familiar to Norwegian readers.

Chapter XL opens with a description of Nancy, her life and her character: ‘The girl’s life had been squandered in the streets, and among the most noisome of the stews and dens of London’ (349). The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists ‘brothel’ as one of the senses of the word

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<sup>29</sup> *Oliver Twist*, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, I, p. 103. ‘Hockley-in-the-Hole’ is written in Latin type, rather than the Gothic font which is used in the rest of the text. Perhaps this is supposed to indicate the foreignness of the name.

<sup>30</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.sadlerswells.com/page/history> [accessed 2 May 2011]

‘stew’, a fact which is not directly expressed in the translations.<sup>33</sup> The Dreyer edition states that ‘Nancy hadde ødslet bort sitt liv på gatene og i de mest ufysiske kneiper og hull i London’, softening the allusion to prostitution. Note also the use of ‘Nancy’ instead of ‘girl’, which makes the statement more specific than the original. Rytter translates ‘stews’ as ‘uanstendige hus’, which is closer to the original meaning, but still a euphemism. The Cammermeyer edition states that ‘Pigen havde tilbragt sit Liv i Gaderne og i de værste Huler i London, men der var dog levnet noget af Kvindens oprindelige Natur hos hende’.<sup>34</sup> It is notable that Dickens, writing in Victorian England, is more direct than the Norwegian translations, some of which were published more than a hundred years later. Hauge has chosen to omit the second paragraph of the chapter, in which the narrator explains how even ‘the lowest and most debased creatures’, like Nancy, feel pride, and that these emotions cause her to suppress her ‘womanly feeling’. Consequently, Nancy is portrayed in the Norwegian edition as a less complex character, and the universal implications of the narrator’s reflection are lost.

In addition to omitting sentences and paragraphs, Hauge’s translation often changes the sentence structure of the original, making the text easier to read for Norwegian readers. In the middle of the description of Nancy’s murder, for instance, Hauge rearranges the order of Sikes’s thoughts, which are described as follows in the original text and in Hauge’s translation respectively:

The house-breaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; (316)

Innbruddstyven hadde nå vridd den ene armen fri og grep pistolen. Men midt i raseriet gikk det opp for ham at hvis han skjøt, ville det bli oppdaget øyeblikkelig,<sup>35</sup>

The Cammermeyer edition renders the same process thus:

Indbrudstyven fik sin ene arm fri og greb sin Pistol. Visheden om øyeblikkelig at blive opdaget, om han skjød, paatrængte sig ham som et Lyn, midt under hans Raseri,<sup>36</sup>

Rytter’s translation follows the original more closely:

<sup>33</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://oed.com/> [accessed 19 April 2011].

<sup>34</sup> *Oliver Twist*, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, II, p. 196.

<sup>35</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge, p. 338.

<sup>36</sup> *Oliver Twist*, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, II, p. 318.

Innbruddstyven fikk ene armen fri, og grep pistolen sin. Men den visse utsikt til å bli oppdaget øieblikkelig dersom han skjød, lynte gjennom hugen hans, enda så rasende han var;<sup>37</sup>

This last sentence reads more clumsily than Hauge's, and could be seen as a foreignizing element. Rationalization is at work not only in the reordering of sentence structure, but also when the translator translates a verb into a noun or chooses a general noun instead of a more specific one. 'In the midst of his fury' becomes 'enda så rasende han var' in Rytter's translation; the noun 'fury' has been replaced by the verb 'rasende'. The dramatic quality of the phrase 'flashed across his mind' is more subdued and less specific in Hauge's translation: 'gikk det opp for ham'. The Cammermeyer translation follows the original, and Rytter's version, closely, save for the use of the metaphor 'som et Lyn' instead of the verb 'lynte'. These changes might seem insignificant, but because they occur throughout the translations, the end product is clearly different from the original. Berman goes very far in condemning such translations, too far perhaps: in his opinion they 'destroy' and 'deform' the original. According to Garrett Stewart, 'Language [...] isn't just something Dickens mobilized or remodeled. Language *per se* is a way of reading him, a way of staying with him through the farthest stretches of invention – and of confronting there his unique place in Victorian letters'.<sup>38</sup> What happens then when Dickens' language is altered, even if ever so slightly, by his translators?

The aftermath of Oliver's attack on Noah Claypole may serve as an example of how the different translations change the style of the original text. The following quotations are taken from the original work, the Cammermeyer edition and the Nasjonalforlaget edition respectively:

But, now, when there were none to see or hear him, he fell upon his knees on the floor; and, hiding his face in his hands, wept such tears as, God send for the credit of our nature, few so young may ever have cause to pour out before him! (58)

Men nu, da ingen saa eller hørte ham, faldt han paa Knæ paa Gulvet, skjulte Ansigtet i sine Hænder og græt saadanne Taarer, som vi for den menneskelige Naturs Skyld maa bede Gud, at kun faa saa unge maa faa Grund til at udgyde for ham.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, p. 418.

<sup>38</sup> Garrett Stewart, 'Dickens and Language', in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 136-151 (p. 138).

<sup>40</sup> *Oliver Twist*, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, I, p. 89.

Men nu da ingen så eller hørte ham, falt han på kne på gulvet, skjulte ansiktet i hendene og gråt såne tårer som – Gud gi vår natur den tiltro – få så unge som han noen gang har hatt grunn til å utgyte fremfor ham!<sup>41</sup>

The Cammermeyer and Nasjonalforlaget editions follow the original closely, but the Dreyer version is quite different: ‘Men nå da ingen så eller hørte ham, falt han på kne på gulvet. Han skjulte ansiktet i hendene og gråt så sår at vi må be til Gud at ingen andre små måtte oppleve det’.<sup>42</sup> This translation is shorter, 36 words compared to 50 in the original and 46 in the Cammermeyer and Rytter versions. In addition to summarizing, Hauge has altered the sentence structure by splitting the original sentence in two. The translators have interpreted the phrase ‘God send for the credit of our nature’ differently, slightly changing the meaning of the original text. In the Cammermeyer and Hauge versions, the readers (‘vi’) are being asked to pray that no one will have to go through what Oliver has gone through, though Hauge omits the reference to ‘our nature’. Rytter has again attempted to translate the text directly, and does not include any reference to praying.

‘The Dickens world is lit with the lurid glare of melodrama,’ writes Stephen Connor, and, as is often the case, this quality is expressed through ‘the swaggering extravagance of [Dickens’s] language’.<sup>43</sup> However, this extravagance is not always retained in the Norwegian translations. Chapter XXXIII describes the illness of Rose Maylie, and is highly melodramatic. While Dickens was writing *Oliver Twist*, his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, suddenly became ill and died. Her death came as a severe blow to Dickens, and caused him to miss a month’s instalment. Referring to this tragic event, Fred Kaplan writes, ‘in the beautiful seventeen-year-old Rose Maylie [...] [Dickens] created an elegiac representation of his lost but ever-present sister’.<sup>44</sup> The following quotations describe Oliver’s reaction to Rose’s illness, first in the original text, then in the Cammermeyer edition, followed by Rytter and Hauge’s translations:

How often did a tremble shake his frame, and cold drops of terror start upon his brow, when a sudden trampling of feet caused him to fear that something too dreadful to think of, had even then occurred! And what had been the fervency of all the prayers he had ever uttered, compared with those he poured forth, now, in the agony and passion

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<sup>41</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge, p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> Steven Connor, ‘Introduction’, in *Charles Dickens*, ed. by Steven Connor (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 1-33 (p. 1).

<sup>44</sup> Fred Kaplan, ‘The Creation of *Oliver Twist*’, in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 552-557 (p. 555).

of his supplication for the life and health of the gentle creature, who was tottering on the deep grave's verge! (221)

Hvor ofte begyndte han ikke at skjælve over hele Legemet, men den kolde Sved sprang frem paa hans Pande, naar en pludselig Lyd af Fodtrin opvakte en Frygt for, at noget, som var altfor forfærdeligt til at tænke paa, kanske havde hændt! Og hvad var vel alle de Bønner, han før havde bedet i Sammenligning med de brændende, angstfulde Bønner, han den Nat opsendte for den blide Skabning, som nu svævede paa Gravens Rand!<sup>46</sup>

Han skalv over hele kroppen, og kaldsvetten stod på pannen hans av angst, når et plutselig fottrinn fikk ham til å tro at noe alt for fryktelig til å tenke på hadde hendt akkurat da. Og hva var inderligheten i de bønnene han noen gang hadde sagt før mot dem han nu bad, nu da han i fortvilelse og angst bad for livet og helsen til det blide vesenet som vaklet på kanten av den dype graven!<sup>47</sup>

Hvor ofte fór han ikke sammen og kaldsvettet, når plutselige fottrinn fikk ham til å frykte for at nå var kanskje det aller forferdeligste hendt. Og aldri hadde han bedt så inderlig og brennende til Gud.<sup>48</sup>

As is often the case in the Dreyer edition, Hauge has contracted or summarized the original text, and boiled it down so that only the basic actions remain: Oliver shakes and breaks into a cold sweat, and prays to God. The 'excessiveness' of Dickens is nowhere to be seen in this simplified translation. Hauge skips past the next paragraph, in which the narrator reflects on the torture which results from the inability to help a loved one. The Cammermeyer and Rytter translations stay closer to the original text.

In a similar manner, Hauge 'tidies up' the mock-heaviness of the opening scene, where 'the labors of bureaucratic circumlocution – the pompous exertions of adult discourse – counterpoint a birth scene'.<sup>49</sup> In Dickens's version, the moments after Oliver's birth are perilous, as there was 'considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration, - a troublesome practice, but one which custom has rendered necessary to our easy existence'(1). Hauge's version is much simpler in structure: 'Saken er at det var så vanskelig å få Oliver til å påta seg jobben med å puste, – en brysom ting, men noe som vi tross alt har måttet venne oss til for overhodet å eksistere'.<sup>51</sup> The passive construction of the last sentence has become active in Hauge's translation, and he uses more general words in place of 'office of respiration' and 'rendered necessary'. The Cammermeyer edition further

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<sup>46</sup> *Oliver Twist*, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, II, p. 95.

<sup>47</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, p. 286.

<sup>48</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge, p. 237.

<sup>49</sup> Stewart, p. 137.

<sup>51</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge, p. 1.

condenses the sentence: ‘Sagen forholdt sig nemlig saaledes, at Oliver hadde vanskelig for at drage Ande’.<sup>52</sup> The phrase ‘Oliver had trouble breathing’ is a far cry from the rather self-important wordiness of the original text, and no reference is made to ‘the troublesome practice’. Rytter follows the original text much more faithfully: ‘Faktum er at det var betydelig vanskelighet forbundet med å få Oliver til å påta sig den funksjon å dra ånde – en plagsom skikk, men en som vanen har gjort nødvendig for vår naturlige tilværelse’.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Hauge, Rytter uses the archaic expression ‘å dra ånde’ instead of the more commonly used ‘puste’, the nearer Norwegian equivalent of ‘breathe’.

The general popularity of Dickens’s early work in Norway may be seen as an indication that Norwegian readers prized the humorous aspect of Dickens’s writing above all else. Referring to *Oliver Twist*, James R. Kincaid writes: ‘Dickens uses laughter here to subvert our conventional reactions and to emphasize more dramatically the isolation of his young hero, indeed the essential isolation of all men’.<sup>54</sup> In *Oliver Twist*, Bumble is the most obvious candidate for satiric ridicule with his pompous nature and tendency to think very highly of himself. A sort of comedic climax is reached in chapter XXXVII, when the newly married Bumble is taken to task by his less than submissive wife. While both the Dreyer and the Nasjonalforlaget editions recount the action and dialogue of that episode, the Dreyer version does not include the narrator’s ironic reflections. For instance, after declaring Bumble a coward, the narrator goes on to modify his designation:

This is by no means a disparagement to his character; for many official personages, who are held in high respect and admiration, are the victims of similar infirmities. The remark is made, indeed, rather in his favour than otherwise, and with a view of impressing the reader with a just sense of his qualifications for office. (242)

Kincaid argues that much of the humour of the novel stems from a desire for revenge, which, although justified, sometimes goes too far: ‘the novel is not satisfied with piercing Bumble’s folly [...] but pursues him to the end, defeats him, degrades him, and rubs him in the mud’.<sup>56</sup> This element is diminished in the Dreyer edition, resulting in a more one-dimensional narrative.

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<sup>52</sup> *Oliver Twist*, Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, I, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> James R. Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>56</sup> Kincaid, p. 57.



The Artful Dodger represents another, warmer kind of humour, which often centres on his tendency to speak, act and dress like an adult. The contrast between his solemn behaviour and Charley Bates's fits of uncontrolled laughter is often used for comedic purposes by Dickens. The opening paragraphs of chapter XXV, for instance, show the pair engaged in a game of whist, here described by Rytter:

Revefulingen hadde blindemannen mot master Bates og mr. Chitling. Ansiktet til den førstnevnte kavaléren, særs klokt og gløgt til alle tider, fikk enda større interesse ved hans spente oppmerksomhet i spillet, og ved at han nøie leste kortene til mr. Chitling; når han fikk høve til det, kastet han nu og da ivrige blikk på dem, og innrettet sitt eget spill meget viselig efter resultatet av observasjonene sine i sidemannens kort. [...] Master Bates fulgte også skarpt med i spillet; men da han var noe mer hissig av sig enn den fullt utlærte vennen sin, kunde en merke sig at han oftere tok til kruset, og dessuten gav sig over til mang slags spøk og uhøvelige bemerkninger som var høist usømmelig i et videnskapelig spill.<sup>57</sup>

This passage serves to make the reader more familiar with some of the minor characters, and shows that life among the criminals does not always have to be brutal; there is room for fun, and their behaviour, while perhaps not exactly innocent, is at least within the law here. The sense of camaraderie and relative happiness in this scene contrasts jarringly with scenes from the workhouse, where the boys barely have enough energy to eat their meagre rations, let alone play games. Episodes like this one make it easier to understand the appeal of Fagin's gang, a point which is undermined in Hauge's translation, as he omits the whole description of the game.

Speaking of the Artful Dodger, Kincaid says that 'his whole life is a kind of brilliant parody of social convention and dull, regularized conduct. This parody is most clearly illustrated by his trial'.<sup>58</sup> The following quotation is taken from the trial, where the Dodger is being sentenced by a judge for picking pockets:

'We'll see wot the Secretary of State for the Home Affairs has got to say to the beaks, if I don't,' replied Mr. Dawkins. 'Now then! Wot is this here business? I shall thank the madg'strates to dispose of this here little affair, and not to keep me while they read the paper, for I've got an appointment with a genelman in the city, and as I'm a man of my word and wery punctual in business matters, he'll og away if I ain't there to my time, and then pr'aps there won't be an action for damage against them as kept me away. Oh no, certainly not!'

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<sup>57</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, pp. 209-210.

<sup>58</sup> Kincaid, p. 69.

At this point, the Dodger, with a show of being very particular with a view to proceedings to be had thereafter, desired the jailer to communicate ‘the names of them two files as was on the bench,’ which so tickled the spectators, that they laughed almost as heartily as Master Bates could have done if he had heard the request. (294)

Here, Dickens contrasts the Dodger’s low manners and rough language with the formal language of the court, as the Dodger ironically imitates the latter. The Dodger often mocks those in power, as in this episode, here translated by Rytter:

‘Vi får se hva’ minister’n i justisdepartementet har å si til purkene, får je’ ke’ vita det’ svarte Dawkins. ‘Nå da! Hva’ er dettane her for sak da? Je’ ska’ si dommerne takk vil de greie op med denne her vesle affæren, og ikke la mig stå her og vente lenger, og de bare sitter og leser avisene, for je’ har avtalt å møte en herre uti by’n, og je’ er mann for mitt ord og ordentlig presis i forretningssaker, så’n går sin vei er je’ ’ke der tel rette tia, og da blir det kanskje en ska’ebotssak mot dem som holder mig borte. Å nei da, det blir vel’ke det, nei!’

Her så Reven ut til å være svært nøie på det med henblikk på den prosessen som kom siden, og bad slutteren om å få vite ‘nøiaktig navnet til de to fulingene som satt i domstolen,’ og dette kitlet tilhørerne sånn at de lo næsten likeså hjertelig som master Bates vilde ha gjort om han hadde vært tilstede og hørt oppfordringen.<sup>60</sup>

For some reason, ‘The Secretary of State for the Home Affairs’ has become ‘Minister of Justice’ in Rytter’s translation, and the ‘beaks’, whom Rytter earlier established as ‘politidommere’ (police judges), are here described as ‘purkene’, a derogatory term for policemen. The heavy legal language of the last paragraph has been lightened somewhat in this version. Hauge’s translation does not deviate much from Rytter’s, though there are some differences:

–Vi får se hva innenriksministeren har å si til purkene hvis jeg ikke får min rett, svarte unge Dawkins. – Men å skal alt detta bety? Jeg ville si dommerne takk om dem kunne få unna denne vesle baggatellen, og ikke la meg stå her og vente lenger mens de sitter der og leser aviser. Jeg har en avtale med en herremann ute i byen, og jeg er en ordholden mann og svært kontant i forretningssaker, så han går nok sin vei hvis jeg ikke er der presis, og så vil det kanskje bli reist erstatningssak mot dem som holder meg borte. Men neida, langt ifra!

Her lot Luringen som han var svært nøye med forhandlingenes videre gang, og bad slutteren om å få vite ”navnene på de to gamle julenissene som satt på

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<sup>60</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Henrik Rytter, p. 386.

dommerbenken”. Og det moret tilhørerne i den grad at de lo nesten likeså hjertelig som unge Bates ville ha gjort om han selv hadde vært til stede.<sup>61</sup>

Hauge uses the term 'innenriksministeren', which is closer to the original title. Both translations use the slightly archaic word 'slutteren' for the jailer, but use different words for the derogatory term 'files': Rytter chooses 'fulingene', which echoes the Dodger's own name 'Revefulingen', while Hauge has gone with 'julenissene', which in this context means 'the fools', but which also refers to Santa Claus, making the statement sound more silly than the original. As is his custom, Hauge tones down the Dodger's use of slang and colloquialisms, thereby lessening the inherent contrast between 'high' and 'low' language. According to Kincaid, the function of the humour in the novel is

to make us see how incomplete and hostile a reaction our laughter is, to force us by this recognition briefly to see in ourselves the shadow of Fang, Mrs. Corney, and the gentleman in the white waistcoat, and to direct us through this insight into a participation in the vital action of the novel which is, at once, more complete and much more intense.<sup>62</sup>

This rather sophisticated side of Dickens's humour is diminished in the Norwegian translations, especially Hauge's version.

## Conclusion

The title of this chapter is in fact a slightly misleading one, it turns out: at least two of the Norwegian translations of *Oliver Twist* discussed above, the Cammermeyer and the Dreyer versions, are abridged, a fact which is not acknowledged by the publishers. Referring to the Cammermeyer edition, James W. Brown writes: 'this edition is heavily abridged; almost all descriptive passages have been omitted; only the narrative essentials remain'.<sup>63</sup> I find it difficult to wholly support this assessment. I rather think Brown's description is more suitable with reference to the Hauge translation. Hauge's text tends towards rationalization and excision, making the text plainer and more standardized. The translation by Rytter relies more often on exoticization, for instance in representing different types of speech, or in giving

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<sup>61</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Eivind Hauge, pp. 313-314.

<sup>62</sup> Kincaid, pp. 70-71.

<sup>63</sup> James Wesley Brown, *Charles Dickens in Norway 1839-1912* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968), p. 44.

streets and places more Norwegian sounding names. Both translations are domesticating: they bring the original text towards the reader and the moment of publication.

Rytter's translation, which is not abridged, was published in 1935. The Norwegian reading public have not, in other words, and somewhat surprisingly, had access to an updated, unabridged version of the novel for over seventy-five years. This could in itself be seen as an indication of the text's status as a children's book. Although a new, complete translation of *Oliver Twist* does not seem likely in the near future, there have in recent decades been signs of an increasing interest in Dickens's later novels. A new translation of *Great Expectations* by Ragnhild Eikli appeared in 1997 and has been reprinted many times since. Bokklubben published a version in 2002 as part of the series 'Verdensbiblioteket' (The Library of World Literature), with an introduction by Henning Hagerup and an afterword by John Irving. Other titles in the series include Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *Middlemarch* by George Eliot and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. In connection with the launch of the series, Bokklubben asked authors from around the world to nominate the best novel of all time, and the winner was *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes. When asked what he thought of the result, Norwegian author Jon Michelet stated that he was happy to see that a popular ('folkelig') author like Dickens had been included.<sup>64</sup> Eikli is currently working on a new translation of *Bleak House* to be published in time for the bicentenary in 2012. In addition to translating *A Christmas Carol*, Torstein Bugge Høverstad has also translated *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1998) and *Our Mutual Friend* (2001).

In Bugge Høverstad's words 'a translation is neither the original nor the Norwegian present, but a magic trick which tries to mimic both at the same time'.<sup>65</sup> His governing principle for translation is to help the reader understand the foreign world of the novel. He does, in other words, favour a domesticating approach. Consequently, Bugge Høverstad is a strong advocate of fluent translations: '[changes to the text] are made with the express purpose of being invisible. It is Dickens we want to read'.<sup>66</sup> The question might be whether we really do read Dickens when we read Bugge Høverstad's translations? Something is always lost in translation, it would seem.

However, if we look at Bugge Høverstad's translations as a whole, we find a lack of consistency in his practice: in the case of *Our Mutual Friend* he seems to favour an invisible, fluent translation, but his translation of the *Harry Potter* books reveals a much more radical

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<sup>64</sup> Stein Østbø, 'Don Quijote tidenes bok', *Verdens Gang*, 8 May 2002, p. 52.

<sup>65</sup> Torstein Bugge Høverstad, 'Oversetterens kommentar', in *Vår felles venn* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2001), p. 848.

<sup>66</sup> Høverstad, p. 849.

approach. His work on the latter series sparked a debate concerning the new names he coined for all the characters. Bugge Høverstad wants it both ways it seems, his translations are domesticating in that he often translates names; he does not always try to find Norwegian equivalents, however, but keeps some of the English terms. Of course, even domesticating strategies may have elements of foreignisation. Consequently, in *Our Mutual Friend* the Veneerings become the Fineerings, while Lizzie Hexam and Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap keep their original, English names.

Eikli favours a different, more foreignizing, approach to translating Dickens, where the reader is transported into Dickens's Victorian world rather than the other way around.<sup>67</sup> However, she uses a modern language and is careful to avoid anachronisms. Unlike Bugge Høverstad, Eikli does not feel the need to explain unfamiliar concepts and references to her readers, though she acknowledges that it is tempting to do so. English-language editions of Dickens's novels often include explanatory footnotes, but this is not usually done in Norwegian editions. She does not translate names, like Bugge Høverstad does, as she feels this would seem out of place in the specifically English context. According to Eikli, there is a growing acceptance of foreignizing translations in Norway, and her goal when translating *Bleak House* is to break free from earlier translations of the novel, to look at Dickens with as few preconceptions as possible.

Eikli laments the fact that Dickens in Norway is primarily seen as a writer of children's books. Consequently, when asked by Aschehoug which of Dickens's novels she would like to translate, she deliberately chose one of his later, more complex works. One of the reasons why Dickens is underrated could be that people mistakenly expect to find realism in his novels, and are consequently disappointed. In Eikli's opinion, what makes Dickens fascinating is just the opposite, the fact that he has created his own universe populated with so many memorable characters. Though they may lack the psychological depth favoured by realism, they nonetheless come to life in the readers' imaginations. According to Eikli, Dickens is not taken seriously in Norway, which almost certainly has to do with the fact that so many of his novels, especially *Oliver Twist*, have been adapted for children.

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Ragnhild Eikli, 11 May 2011.



## Chapter 2: *Oliver Twist* for Children

### Introduction: The Materiality of Texts

‘History simply confirms, as a bibliographical fact, that quite new versions of a work which is not altogether dead, *will* be created, whether they are generated by its author, by its successive editors, by generations of readers, or by new writers’.<sup>1</sup> This quotation from bibliographer and textual scholar D. F. McKenzie expresses one of the essential premises of the field of study called book history: that a text is not a fixed entity, but exists simultaneously in numerous forms, and that these forms together make up the work. Rather than being a unified discipline, book history may be called an interdisciplinary mode of investigation concerned with one or more stages in the life cycle of the printed book. Robert Darnton describes this cycle as a ‘communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher [...], the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader’.<sup>2</sup> Book history is thus linked to the economic, social, political and cultural systems of a society. In Norway, new versions of *Oliver Twist* have been created in the many editions aimed at children and young adults.

Book historians are also interested in the book as a medium, i.e., in what is specific to a printed text as opposed to for instance a film or an oral transmission. Jerome J. McGann coined the term ‘bibliographical codes’ to describe the material properties of the text. These operate in conjunction with the linguistic codes, which are restricted to the text itself.<sup>3</sup> To a certain degree, Gérard Genette’s term *paratext* overlaps with McGann’s bibliographical codes. In Genette’s words, ‘the paratext is what enables the text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers, and more generally, to the public’.<sup>4</sup> Examples of paratexts are the title of a work, the name of the author, any form of preface or introduction, in short all the aspects associated with ‘the external presentation of the text’. McGann, however, objects that ‘the text/paratext distinction [...] will not, by Genette’s own admission, explore such matters as ink, typeface, paper and various other phenomena which are crucial to the understanding of textuality’.<sup>5</sup> These features, in addition to the paratexts, convey meaning, and should be taken

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Francis McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘What Is the History of Books?’, *Daedalus*, 111 (1982), 65-83 (p. 67).

<sup>3</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> McGann, p. 13.

into account when analysing a work. Before moving on to a textual analysis I will therefore examine the bibliographical codes of the Norwegian children's editions of *Oliver Twist*.

According to the cultural historian Roger Chartier, the bibliographical codes, or the material features of the text 'contribute fully to shaping the anticipations of the reader *vis-à-vis* the text and to the production of new publics or innovative uses for it'.<sup>6</sup> This is true of the children's versions of *Oliver Twist*, which have gained new audiences and created their own 'horizons of understanding' within which they engage their readers.<sup>7</sup> This horizon may be far from the horizon within which the author originally worked, and consequently each new version of *Oliver Twist* has its own historical identity. In other words, studying each edition as a material object and paying attention to its bibliographical codes helps in the process of historicizing the work.<sup>8</sup>

### **'There are books of which the backs and covers are by far the best parts'**

As the general book market in Norway grew in the inter-war period, so did the market for children's books. The serious publishers, with Aschehoug in the lead, were the first to target children as readers. The growing number of schools and libraries was an important factor in the development of the market for children's books, and these institutions to a large extent determined both the contents and the style of the books.<sup>9</sup> After the Second World War, children's literature experienced a surge in popularity, and from 1940 to 1970 the percentage of translated children's literature increased from 40 to 60 per cent of the total number of children's books published.<sup>10</sup>

In 1940, Norwegian publishers Gyldendal Norsk Forlag and John Griegs Forlag published separate children's editions of Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*. These were the first in a string of abridged versions, the most recent being published in 2003 by Gyldendal. Counting reprints, thirteen editions for children were published between 1940 and 2003, which is twice as many as the unabridged versions. The only books which clearly state

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<sup>6</sup> Roger Chartier, 'Labourers and Voyagers', in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by D. Finkelstein and A. Cleery (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 47-58 (p. 51).

<sup>7</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, 'The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding', in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. by James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 7-28.

<sup>8</sup> George Bornstein, 'How to Read a Page', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 32 (1999), 29-58 (p. 33).

<sup>9</sup> *Norsk barnelitteraturhistorie*, ed. by Tone Birkeland, Gunvor Risa and Karin Beate Vold, 2nd edn (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2005), p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> *Norsk barnelitteraturhistorie*, p. 155.



that they are retellings are the editions published by Gyldendal (1940), Ex Libris and Luther Forlag. None of the editions include any indication of where text has been excised or altered. Another common feature of the children's editions is the presentation of the title, which is always written in larger type than the name of the author, Charles Dickens. This implies that the work itself, rather than the author, was, and still is, the main selling point and the most instantly recognizable feature of the work. This view is supported by Sonja Hagemann, a Norwegian literary critic specializing in literature for children, who has stated that children rarely pay much attention to the name of the author, but buy books based on the title and cover.<sup>11</sup> The second part of the original title, *The Parish Boy's Progress*, has disappeared; only the name of the protagonist, *Oliver Twist*, now remains. Consequently, a part of the original social context has been removed: the term parish boy was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe someone 'maintained or provided for by the parish'.<sup>12</sup> The word 'progress' echoed John Bunyan's Christian allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was first published in 1678. It was also used in the titles of two series of paintings by William Hogarth: *A Harlot's Progress* and *A Rake's Progress*, completed in 1731 and 1735 respectively. These moral works showed the disturbing fates of a prostitute and of the reckless son of a rich merchant.

## Gyldendal

The 1940 Gyldendal edition of *Oliver Twist* was translated by Hugo Gyllander, who also translated the novel into Danish. The Danish edition was published in Denmark in 1943 by Ungdommens Forlag.<sup>13</sup> The title page of the Norwegian book states that this is a retelling for young people, a clarification which is not found in any of the subsequent Gyldendal editions. The cover illustration shows Oliver being arrested by a policeman while Mr. Brownlow and another man observe them from the background. The artist is unknown, and there are no illustrations inside the book. It was published as part of a series called 'Gyldendals Gode Guttebøger (G.G.G.)'<sup>14</sup>, which included *Stefan i Shanghai*, *Nordsjøgutter*, *Jegerne fra Tamifloden* and *Per på sporet*, in addition to more well-known works by James Fenimore Cooper, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jules Verne. A list of abstracts of the other books in the

<sup>11</sup> Sonja Hagemann, 'Rovdrift på barneklassikere', *Vinduet*, 4 (1951), 299-300 (p. 299).

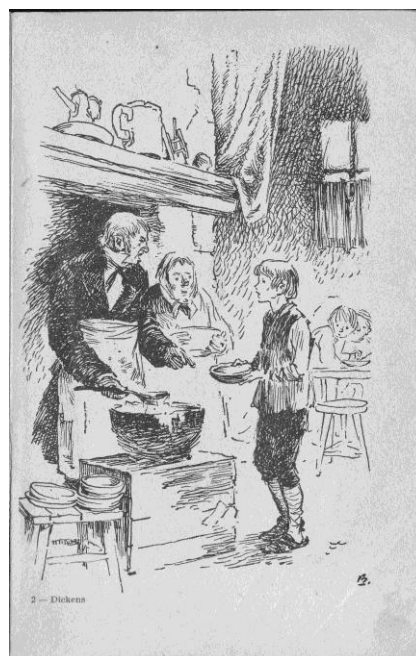
<sup>12</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <http://oed.com/> [accessed 10 May 2011].

<sup>13</sup> See Jørgen Erik Nielsen, *Dickens i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2009), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> 'Gyldendal's Good Books for Boys'. Gyldendal had a corresponding series for girls called 'Gyldendals Gode Pikebøger/Gyldendal's Good Books for Girls'.

series printed after the text of *Oliver Twist* makes it clear that the target audience are young boys. The plots of these books usually revolve around the adventures of a boy, often in an exotic country. The series described itself as ‘the books every boy wants’, and claimed to have sold very well previously.<sup>15</sup> Publishing a book as part of a series makes it easier for potential readers to identify what kind of work it is, and helps the publisher single out particular groups of readers, in this case children. It can also create faithful target groups who collect all the volumes of a particular series.

In 1950 Gyldendal published *Oliver Twist* again, this time translated by Torleif Goderstad, as part of a series called ‘De aller beste’ (The Very Best). The series claimed to bring ‘the world’s best young adult books of all time’ to its readers, and promised that ‘boys and girls today will devour these immortal novels just as their parents did when they were young’. This advertisement seems to have been aimed as much at the parents of potential readers as at the readers themselves. From the text on the back cover it is clear that ‘De aller beste’ existed alongside the G.G.G./G.G.P. series, which had now started to focus more exclusively on contemporary literature for children. A distinction was made, in other words, between classics from another era, most often books originally written for adults, and newer fiction. By the time this edition was published, the series comprised six novels, the other five being *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson, *King Solomon’s Mines* by H. Rider Haggard, *Nobody’s Boy* by Hector Malot, *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne, and *The Last of the Mohicans* by J. F. Cooper. The second edition of the Goderstad translation, published in 1962, listed only four volumes in the series; Haggard, Malot and Cooper had disappeared, while Lewis Wallace’s *Ben Hur* had been added. The four novels were presented to the reader in the last two pages of the book. The cover illustration for both editions depicts Nancy and Bill Sikes as they recapture Oliver. Inside the book are four whole-page black-and-white line drawings by Gunnar Bratlie, who also illustrated other books in the same series. One of the subjects is the incident where Oliver asks for more food.



<sup>15</sup> All translations from primary sources in Norwegian are my own, unless otherwise stated. Furthermore, where the Norwegian translations of *Oliver Twist* differ greatly from the original version, or where there is no equivalent to be found in the original text, I have provided my own translation.

Writing in 1951, the above-mentioned Sonja Hagemann, was critical of the new crop of series for children and teenagers, in particular Gyldendal's 'De aller beste'. In an article entitled 'Exploitation of Children's Classics' she accused the publishing industry of flooding the market with cheap, heavily abridged children's versions of classic novels.<sup>18</sup> The publishing houses competed with each other as to who could offer the lowest prices, and 'De aller beste' was among the cheapest at 3.85 Norwegian kroner per book. In order to achieve this, Gyldendal spent a minimum on book design, and kept each translation within a set number of pages, usually around 150. In some cases the reduction of the original text could be defended, according to Hagemann, but in other cases the changes made to the text were akin to 'a brutal amputation'. As a consequence, classic novels came to resemble more and more the mass-produced adventure books of popular literature. Hagemann advised readers who wanted to see the effects for themselves to read *Oliver Twist* or *Around the World in Eighty Days*. 'These condensed products do not provide the reader with a literary experience', she cautioned potential buyers of children's classics.

Starting with the edition of *Oliver Twist* published in 1993, the later Gyldendal versions were published as part of a series called 'Gyldendals Ungdomsklassikere' (GUK).<sup>19</sup> The series featured a more expensive book design, with new cover art by illustrator Hilde Kramer. Despite these updates, Gyldendal continued to use the translation by Torleif Goderstad, first published in 1950. Consequently, the text of the most recent version of *Oliver Twist*, published in 2003, is actually over fifty years old. The GUK editions include an afterword by Tormod Haugen, a popular and acclaimed author of children's books. Although this paratext is placed after the text itself, it functions like an introduction. Haugen gives a brief outline of Dickens's life, including his marriage and divorce, his travels to America and his difficult childhood. He is careful to state that *Oliver Twist* is not an autobiographical novel, but instead notes that the author drew on some of his childhood experiences when describing Oliver's fate. Issues concerning the original social context and reception of the novel are mentioned, such as the Poor Law of 1834 and the fact that some reviewers were critical. Haugen comments on the apparent discrepancy between Oliver's speech and manners and the rough place where he grew up, saying that perhaps the author wished to portray him as incorruptible. Although the afterword discusses valid points about Dickens and the text itself, it does not comment on the fact that what the audience has just read, or is about to read, is very far from the text that Dickens wrote.

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<sup>18</sup> Hagemann, p. 299.

<sup>19</sup> 'Gyldendal's Classics for Young Adults'.

## Ex Libris

The Ex Libris edition of *Oliver Twist*, published in 1988, was translated into Norwegian from an abridged Danish version by Morten Jørgensen. The book cover is illustrated by Robert Viby, and shows Oliver being chased down the street by a mob after the theft of Mr. Brownlow's handkerchief. There are no illustrations inside the book, which numbers 129 pages. The text is divided into 53 chapters, but the descriptive chapter headings have been omitted. This edition is part of a series called 'Berømte klassikere' (Famous Classics): a series which included many of the same books as in the Gyldendal series. Among the authors are Victor Hugo, Captain Marryat and Jack London. Dickens is listed twice, first with *Oliver Twist*, then with *David Copperfield*. Unlike most of the Gyldendal editions, however, this edition clearly states that it is a retelling in a blurb on the back cover: 'The celebrated classics of world literature retold. Now children can read them for themselves!'.

## John Griegs Forlag

The John Griegs Forlag edition, translated by Herbrand Lavik, was published in 1940, the same year as the first Gyldendal edition. At 262 pages it is longer than the other children's versions, which, along with the fact that there are no illustrations, indicates a slightly older readership. John Griegs Forlag was based in Bergen rather than Oslo, and Lavik, who was born in Bergen, uses a less standardised Norwegian than the other translators. This version included a preface by Lavik. He starts this by contrasting *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*, claiming that Dickens wrote the latter to show that he was capable of writing a serious work. Lavik emphasises Dickens's background as a journalist, and states that 'first and foremost, it is the journalistic Dickens who dominates this novel'. This translator further comments on Dickens's defence of his choice of subject matter, saying that such a defence might have been necessary when *Oliver Twist* was first published, but that readers today would hardly be outraged by the novel. Lavik praises the novel as an important social commentary, but is critical of its literary effects. This preface contains by far the most interesting comments on Dickens and *Oliver Twist* to be found in any of the editions, as the translator discusses a number of points which might influence our reading of the novel. Lavik clearly favours a biographical reading of the novel, arguing for instance that Mr. Bumble's matrimonial disaster is a reflection of the author's own troubled marriage.

## Norsk Kunstnerforlag, Skandinavisk Presse AS and Luther Forlag

The three editions published by Norsk Kunstnerforlag (1976), Skandinavisk Presse AS (1985) and Luther Forlag (1995) are picture book versions of *Oliver Twist*, intended for younger children. They are illustrated throughout and have less text than the other editions, ranging from 29 to 63 pages in length. The Norsk Kunstnerforlag edition seems to aim for a somewhat older readership than the other versions, presenting *Oliver Twist* ‘in an abridged version for young people today’. Luther Forlag uses the phrase ‘children of today’ to describe its audience, and emphasizes the use of modernized language in its version. Both editions are anxious to present themselves as modern, up to date versions of *Oliver Twist*, aware, perhaps, that children have numerous entertainment options and that the status of the classics is not what it once was. The edition published by Skandinavisk Presse does not make any statements about its intended audience, but judging from the illustrations and the fact that it was published as part of ‘Bokklubben Barnas Bokpakke’, it was probably intended for younger children. The Norwegian translations are based on abridged versions of Dickens’s text, not the original text itself. These versions were published in several countries using the same illustrations and book design.

All three editions contain a short note on the text and biographical information about Dickens. These brief remarks focus on Dickens’s childhood, drawing parallels between him and Oliver: they both experienced poverty and had to start work at an early age. The Skandinavisk Presse edition notes that ‘this was a difficult time for [Dickens], and memories from this period emerge over and over again in his books, above all in the autobiographical novel *David Copperfield*’. Luther Forlag similarly supports a biographical reading of *Oliver Twist*, and claims that ‘this is probably the reason why the story of Oliver Twist seems so real’. Skandinavisk Presse somewhat inaccurately informs the reader that Dickens’s novels were published as monthly instalments in ‘newspapers’, and that they, more uncontroversially, ‘became very popular’. *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* are cited as being of particular interest today, ‘the former as a musical and the latter as a television drama’, referring to Lionel Bart’s musical *Oliver!* and the nine-hour 1982 version of *Nicholas Nickleby* by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The latter was broadcast on Norwegian national television in 1983.<sup>26</sup> The image of Dickens as a writer of children’s books is established in the short preface to the Norsk Kunstnerforlag edition: ‘*Oliver Twist* is one of

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<sup>26</sup> Borghild Maaland, ‘Dickens-suksess i ny TV-serie’, *Verdens Gang*, 6 January 1983.

Dickens' best novels, which children read over and over again'. There is no hesitancy, it seems, as to this novel primarily being a work for children.

The first fully illustrated version of *Oliver Twist* was translated into Norwegian by Unni Evang. This edition is in a larger format and larger type than any of the other editions. There are colour illustrations on every page spread, and they usually occupy one third to one half of the page. The majority of the illustrations feature Oliver, who tends to become more passive, both in the drawings and in the text, as the story progresses. The characters are frequently viewed up close, so that their facial expressions, and therefore their feelings, are clearly identifiable. As a result, the city recedes into the background and is only sketched roughly to suggest that the characters are outside. Bill Sikes's death, for instance, shows Bill falling off a cliff, with no roof and no house to be seen. The illustrations are very colourful, which gives a rather different, more cheerful, impression of the atmosphere of the story than if they had been simply black and white.

Next to Oliver, Rose Maylie is the most frequently illustrated character in the Norsk Kunstnerforlag edition. This may perhaps seem surprising, considering her relatively minor role in the original narrative. The text reflects the emphasis on Rose by including all elements of her story: her sudden illness, Harry's proposal and her refusal of it, her relationship with Oliver, and finally her marriage. Many of the earlier editions did not include all of these episodes, and some made almost no mention of Rose at all. It is possible to read this as an attempt to attract and entertain girls as readers, whereas the earlier books were aimed more directly at boys. Significantly, the last illustration in the book has a romantic theme, featuring Harry and Rose standing before Mrs. Maylie, with Oliver and Mr. Brownlow looking on. Although the latter two are standing closer to the reader, our attention is focused on the young couple. The illustration on the preceding page shows the proposal in an equally romantic manner: Harry and Rose are sitting on the bank of a river, a house can be glimpsed in the background, and they are surrounded by lush, green vegetation. This is very far indeed from

the squalid streets of London, or the grim realities faced by Fagin in his cell.



The text of the Skandinavisk Presse edition was translated into Norwegian by Oddrun Lyngstad, and P. Ruben provided the illustrations. These are more cartoonish than the other picture book versions, with the outline drawn in pen and the colour filled in later. Rather than focusing on Rose Maylie, this version features Bill Sikes and Fagin more often than the other editions. The latter here looks more like a kind grandfather than a notorious criminal from the London underworld. In the last picture, Oliver is sitting at a table with Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Grimwig, while Mrs. Bedwin is serving them food. The rear endpaper contains the note on the text discussed above, as well as two illustrations: the larger shows the author sitting at his desk, surrounded by books, while the smaller illustration, in making a more explicit biographical connection between the novel and its author, pictures the young Dickens asleep in the blacking factory. The cover art features portraits of the main characters – Oliver, Fagin, Sikes, Nancy and the Dodger – against a city backdrop.



The third picture book version of *Oliver Twist* was published in Norway in 1995 by Luther Forlag, and is a translation of a retelling by Anne de Graaf, illustrated by José Pérez Montero. Luther Forlag specializes in Christian books and Bibles for children and adults, as does Scandinavia Publishing House, the original Danish publisher. It is therefore not surprising that the religious element of the novel is more clearly present in this edition than in most of the other children's versions. Oliver often prays to God, for instance when he is



abandoned by Bill after the failed robbery. After meeting Mr. Brownlow and Rose at the bridge, Nancy calls after them: ‘Gud velsigne dere!’ (God bless you!). The episode involving Dick, Oliver’s friend from the ‘infant farm’, is included, as is the revelation towards the end that Dick is dead. Oliver’s reaction to this news again has a religious slant to it: ‘Det var vanskelig for Oliver å godta at hans lille venn hadde dratt til englene han så ofte hadde drømt om.’<sup>28</sup>

Like the Norsk Kunstnerforlag edition, the Luther edition of *Oliver Twist* ends with an illustration showing the newlyweds Harry and Rose, with Oliver and Mr. Brownlow in the background. However, the subjects of the illustrations are generally more varied in this edition, and include more scenes from the early parts of the novel, such as the birth of Oliver, Mr. Bumble taking him to the workhouse and of course the episode in which Oliver asks for more food. In keeping with the slightly more religious tone of the work, a whole page is devoted to an illustration of Oliver attending a funeral with Mr. Sowerberry. Considerable space is also given to the illustration showing Fagin’s lair. Montero frequently uses warm colours like red and orange, which changes the visual context of the story and makes it more cheerful. There are few illustrations featuring Nancy, but in those that do include her she has short, dark hair, and appears quite child-like. The description of Nancy given in the text contrasts oddly with the illustrations in the Luther Forlag edition:



Nancy var en ung kvinne som kokte og stjal for Bill Sikes. Hun hadde vokst opp i den verste delen av London og var like hardkokt som alle mennene rundt henne. Og hun var hemmelig forelsket i Bill og ville gjøre hva som helst for ham.<sup>29</sup>

This introduction is made after the Dodger and Charley return to Fagin without Oliver, and the next scene describes how Nancy and Bill capture Oliver. Since the text omits the episode where Nancy defends Oliver from Fagin, she is not given the opportunity to redeem herself

<sup>28</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Ellen Marie Hansen (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1995), p. 62. ‘It was hard for Oliver to accept that his little friend had joined the angels of whom he had so often dreamed’.

<sup>29</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Ellen Marie Hansen, p. 28. ‘Nancy was a young woman who cooked and stole for Bill Sikes. She had grown up in the worst part of London and was as hard-boiled as the men around her. And she was secretly in love with Bill and would do anything for him’.



until she goes to see Rose much later in the narrative. Fagin's role in making Nancy into a thief and prostitute is not explained here either.

According to illustrator Martin Salisbury, 'no imaginative writing should "need" illustrating: the pictures are not there to reiterate or clarify the words. But pictures can greatly add to the reader's experience.'<sup>30</sup> It is questionable whether the illustrated versions of *Oliver Twist* discussed above add much to the reading experience, at least in terms of artistic quality. However, the illustrations break up the text, making the page look less monotonous, and in some cases they clarify the story.

## Less Is More?

The material features of the Norwegian children's editions outlined above demonstrate that although they share many characteristics, there is also great variation between them. In the following analysis, I will investigate whether the same is true of the texts themselves, or whether the disparity is confined to the physical appearance of the books. As to their relationship with the original text, the children's editions are closer in nature to adaptations than traditional translations. My aim in this section is to establish whether the editions follow a common pattern of adaptation or whether the translators have employed divergent translation strategies when dealing with elements such as the language, dialects and sociolects, the complexity of the plot, historical references and episodes which could be considered unsuitable for children.

One such potentially controversial episode in *Oliver Twist* is the murder of Nancy by her lover Bill Sikes. The event, in which Sikes savagely bludgeons Nancy to death, is treated quite differently by the different translators. The Luther Forlag edition omits the entire murder, and only describes the 'before and after' situations, whereas the Norsk Kunstnerforlag version states that Bill hits Nancy with a club, without going into details. An element which was considered important in the original, but which has gone missing from most of the children's versions, except the Ex Libris edition, is the religious, redemptive motif, represented by Rose Maylie's handkerchief. According to John O. Jordan, the handkerchief also presents a contrast to 'the phallic violence of Sikes', in addition to

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Salisbury, *Illustrating Children's Books: Creating Pictures for Publication* (London: A&C Black Publishers, 2004), p. 95.

signifying ‘the sisterly bond’ between Nancy and Rose.<sup>31</sup> These elements are lost in most of the children’s versions. Perhaps because Nancy is not, in the first place, described as a prostitute in these editions, there is less need to make her seem more virtuous by including her speech and the image of her holding up Rose’s handkerchief.

This is how the murder was described in the original text from 1846:

The house-breaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own. She staggered and fell: nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief – Rose Maylie’s own – and holding it up, in her folded hands, as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker. It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down. (316-317)

The 1940 Gyldendal edition, translated by Hugo Gyllander, gives this version:

Han skalv under hennes blikk, men i neste øyeblikk sleit han seg ut av pikens armer, rev pistolen opp av lomma og trykket av. Nancys hode sank ned på puta. Ansiktet hennes, som for en stund siden hadde vært aldeles forvridd av skrekk, var nå blitt glatt og rolig. Det var som om hun lå i en dyp, rolig søvn.<sup>33</sup>

The John Griegs Forlag edition is as follows:

Han klemte fingrene inn i halsen på henne. Den høyre neven fant pistolen i lommen. Han vågde ikke skyte. Så drev han til henne med skjefet, en gang, to ganger. Nancy stønte og vridde på seg. Så ble hun stille. [...] Med en gang hun rørte på seg, smeiste han til henne i hodet med klubba. Det for en skjelv gjennom henne. Hun snudde seg på ryggen og åpnet øynene. Så maste det neste slaget i pannen på henne. Han slo og slo i ørska.<sup>34</sup>

The Ex Libris edition opts for the following version:

Hun klamret seg til ham, men han vred seg løs og grep pistolen sin. Han kom til å tenke på at alt ville bli oppdaget med det samme hvis han skjøt henne. I stedet hugget

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<sup>31</sup> John O. Jordan, ‘The Purloined Handkerchief’, in *Oliver Twist*, ed. By Fred Kaplan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 580-592 (p. 589).

<sup>33</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Hugo Gyllander (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1940), p. 106.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik (Bergen: John Griegs Forlag, 1940), p. 239.

han pistolskjeftet mot det oppadvendte ansiktet hennes to ganger med all sin kraft. Hun vaklet og falt, nesten blindet av blodet som strømmet fra et dypt sår i pannen. Hun sank på kne og fikk med store problemer tatt kniplingslommeørkleet – Rose Maylies – fram fra brystet og holdt det opp i de foldede hendene sine. Hun strakte hendene så høyt opp mot himmelen som de svake kreftene hennes tillot det, og stammet fram en bønn om nåde til Gud. Det var et redselsfullt syn. Sikes vaklet tilbake mot veggen og dekket øynene med hånden for å slippe å se det tryglende blikket hennes. Så tok han opp en tung kølle og slo henne så hun falt om på gulvet.<sup>35</sup>

As these extracts demonstrate, each edition gives its own account of the murder. In the translation by Gyllander, Sikes kills Nancy by shooting her, rather than by hitting her with his pistol and club. There is no mention of blood, and Nancy simply falls onto the bed ‘as if in a deep, untroubled sleep’. This sanitized version of the murder is retained in Goderstad’s translation, which is used in the subsequent Gyldendal editions. It is more than possible that Goderstad based his translation on Gyllander’s version rather than on the original text. Lavik, however, describes the murder in surprisingly gory detail, leaving the reader with a very violent situation devoid of any ‘softening’ features. The sentences are short, and the battering action is repeated several times, with different synonyms for the word ‘beat’: ‘så *drev* han til henne’; ‘*smeiste* han til henne’ and ‘*maste* det neste slaget’. These expressions are not commonly used in standardized Norwegian (Bokmål). In Lavik’s translation Nancy hardly gets to speak at all: her defence of her actions and her pleading with Bill to escape with her is left out. Though the language is simplified, the Ex Libris version adheres closely to the original: it describes Sikes’s thoughts and includes the scene with the handkerchief.

While it is possible to see why the brutal murder of Nancy could pose a problem when translating and adapting a work for children, it is not entirely clear why some of the editions have chosen to alter the death of Bill Sikes. The original text runs as follows:

Staggering as if struck by lightning, he lost his balance and tumbled over the parapet. The noose was at his neck. It ran up with his weight, tight as a bow-string, and swift as the arrow it speeds. He fell for five-and-thirty feet. There was a sudden jerk, a terrific convulsion of the limbs; and there he hung, with the open knife clenched in his stiffening hand. (340)

In the Gyldendal editions Sikes dies by falling to the ground and hitting his head on the stone pavement, which is more or less what happens to his dog in the original text: ‘he fell into the ditch [...] and striking his head against a stone, dashed out his brains’ (340). The fate of

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<sup>35</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Morten Jørgensen (Oslo: Ex Libris, 1988), p.112.

Sikes' dog is not mentioned at all in the final scene of the Gyldendal translations. In the Lavik translation it is more unclear whether Sikes' death is an accident or if he intended to kill himself:

Han gjorde noe med tauet. Så sprang han fra taket og ut, ut av lysbuntene, ut i mørket. Da lyset fant ham igjen, hang han og dinglet mot muren, det rykte i ham ennå, hodet hadde lagt seg forvridt og fortrunkent på skrå. Strikka hadde fått ham.<sup>38</sup>

The Ex Libris edition retains Sikes' death as described in the original, but with less detail. Surprisingly, so too does the Luther Forlag version, which is aimed at a younger audience: 'han falt...det kom et plutselig rykk, kroppen hans danset og vred seg, og der hang han'.<sup>39</sup> The edition by Norsk Kunstnerforlag, however, has Sikes fall from the roof and into a ditch, and does not mention the rope or the dog.

Another potential problem when translating *Oliver Twist* is the anti-Semitic stereotyping of Fagin. How to portray Fagin poses a dilemma for makers of adaptations, and perhaps even more so in the medium of film, where his physical appearance immediately and unequivocally makes an impact on the audience. One possible solution would be stay as close to the original text, or even the original illustrations, as possible; another would be to modify it to avoid offending the audience. In 1863, Dickens himself was made aware of the harmful effects of such stereotyping by a Jewish woman called Eliza Davis. In his reply to her allegations of anti-Semitism, Dickens defended his portrayal of Fagin by explaining that most of the London small-time criminals in the period in which *Oliver Twist* is set happened to be Jews. He also pointed out that the other villains in the story are Christians, and that Fagin was called a Jew 'not because of his religion, but because of his race'.<sup>40</sup> Still, he protested that 'I have no feeling towards the Jewish people but a friendly one', and enclosed in the letter a donation to a Jewish charity. By creating a 'good Jew' in the character Riah in *Our Mutual Friend*, it is generally believed that Dickens wished to undo the damage caused by Fagin. In his essay 'Dickens and the Jews', literary critic Harry Stone demonstrates exactly how Dickens's attitude changed between the time he wrote *Oliver Twist* and *Our Mutual Friend*. The former was written in a predominantly anti-Semitic period, and Dickens unthinkingly reflected the opinion of his surroundings. 'Yet *Oliver Twist* is not as anti-Semitic as one might

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<sup>38</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 257.

<sup>39</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Ellen Marie Hansen, p. 57. 'He fell...there was a sudden jerk, his body danced and twisted, and there he hung'.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Letter to Eliza Davis, 10 July 1863', in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), p. 378.

expect', writes Stone: 'Fagin is less a premeditated attack on the Jews than a convenient villain drawn to an ancient pattern.'<sup>41</sup>

The fact that two of the Norwegian editions, the Gyllander and Lavik translations, were published at the start of the Second World War adds another dimension to the issue of latent anti-Semitism in *Oliver Twist*. Gyllander uses the word Jew throughout the text when referring to Fagin, but the initial description is otherwise neutral: 'ved komfyren stod en gammel jøde og stekte et eller annet på en panne. Han var rødhåret og rynket.'<sup>42</sup> For at least one reader, this was not acceptable: in a library copy of the book which I consulted in the process of my research, someone had crossed out the word 'Jew', substituting it for 'man'. References to drinking and smoking had also been crossed out in this interesting if small source to the history of reading. The Lavik translation presents a different, more sinister version of Fagin:

Framfor peisen stod en gammel mann, vissen og sunken. Han holdt på å steike noen pølsesnabber på panne, men han så opp fra arbeidet sitt, da de kom inn. Et par ulveøyne gløste mot Oliver. En diger, kvass nese værte mot ham. Et rødt flokeskjegg splittet seg over et vaktsomt glis.<sup>43</sup>

Fagin is not referred to as 'the Jew' in this paragraph; instead, Lavik relies on the reader's familiarity with stereotypically Jewish features such as the red beard and 'a huge, sharp nose'. The latter trait is not commented on in the original text, which runs as follows:

In a frying-pan which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villanous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. (65)

The other translations omit all references to Fagin being a Jew, and simply describe him as 'the old man', as in the Ex Libris edition: 'I et mørkt og skittent rom i første etasje sto en rynket, gammel mann med tjafsete, rødt hår ved en stekepanne. Han hadde et frastøtende skurkeansikt'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Harry Stone, 'Dickens and the Jews', *Victorian Studies*, 2 (1959), 223-253 (p. 233).

<sup>42</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Hugo Gyllander, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Morten Jørgensen, pp. 26-27.

The third death in the novel is that of Fagin, who was famously depicted by Cruikshank sitting in his prison cell. The Gyldendal editions include Oliver and Mr. Brownlow's visit to Fagin in his cell, but the glimpses inside Fagin's mind as the time of the execution draws closer are gone. In the Luther Forlag version, Fagin's trial and punishment is mentioned in a single sentence, and there is no account of Oliver's visit to the prison. The Norsk Kunstnerforlag version includes a summary account of both the trial and Oliver's visit, as does the Ex Libris edition. The only edition which spends some time exploring Fagin's state of mind is the translation by Lavik. Here, the final chapter is almost in its entirety devoted to Fagin's last days alive. The chapter starts by showing Fagin alone in his cell, muttering to himself like an insane man and offering to inform on his fellow criminals to get out of prison. He even suggests that the guard summon a priest so that he can convert and confess in order to avoid the gallows:

Kan han hjelpe meg? frittet han fult. Kan han få meg ut herfra? Ja, send bud etter presten. Gamle Fagin er ikke noen urimelig mann. Jeg skal døpe meg, hehehehe, jeg skal omvende meg og skrifte og fortelle alt, hvis bare han får meg ut herfra.<sup>46</sup>

This part is not found in the original, which states that Fagin refused to see any religious leaders of his own faith. Lavik here takes the opportunity to make a mockery of Christian faith.

Of all the children's editions, the Lavik translation has the most divergent text: many plot elements have been altered, some have been omitted entirely and new material has been added. The sub-plot involving Rose and Harry Maylie has for instance been left out, as has the fact that Oliver and Rose are related. One example of how Lavik has changed the original text is his treatment of the relationship between Mr. Bumble, Mrs. Mann and Mrs. Corney. In Dickens's text, Mrs. Mann runs the 'orphan farm' where Oliver is brought after his mother dies. Mrs. Corney, the matron of the workhouse, is introduced later, as the object of Mr. Bumble's matrimonial desire. Lavik dispenses with Mrs. Corney, and instead has Mr. Bumble marry Mrs. Mann, after which the couple are put in charge of the workhouse. From then on, Mrs. Mann takes on the role and personality of Mrs. Corney, for instance visiting old Sally on her deathbed and humiliating Mr. Bumble. Lavik also frequently alters the pace of the narrative, most often, it seems, for the sake of clarification: Monks is for instance introduced

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<sup>46</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 259. 'Can he help me? he asked cunningly. Can he get me out of here? Yes, send for the vicar. Old Fagin is not an unreasonable man. I'll get baptized, hehehehe, I'll covert and confess and tell everything if only he'll get me out of here'.

into the narrative at an early stage along with Nancy and Bet, perhaps to make his appearance and interest in Oliver later on seem less confusing to the reader. Similarly, Lavik makes it clear already from their second meeting that Mr. Bumble wants to marry Mrs. Mann for her money, as witnessed by his internal monologue:

Hun biter på kroken, fortalte han seg selv. [...] Det er nok ikke lite hun har på kistebotnen, det gamle spetakkelet. Minst 1000 kroner har hun stukket til side hvert år, kanskje 1500 kroner og, for det jeg vet. En slags liten livspolise for herr Bumble, hm, hm, hm.<sup>47</sup>

Here, his intentions are expressed much more directly than in the original version, which humourously implies that Bumble is assessing the wealth of his future bride when left alone in her parlour: 'He opened the closet, counted the tea-spoons, weighed the sugar-tongs, closely inspected a silver milk-pot to ascertain that it was of the genuine metal' (161).

The Lavik translation goes further than the other editions in its initial description of Nancy and Bet:

De hadde en utrolig mengde krøllet hår, og kjolene deres var så glorete at du kunne sett dem lange veier. Skoene var styltehøye, men ikke alltid det en kunne ventet, de var såleslitte jamt, og hælene la seg over ende. Det så ut som de gikk utrolig mye etter gatesteinene og slet sko. Men det var kjekke damer, svært endeframme, ikke knep de øynene i hop som fru Mann brukte, og ikke snurpet de seg sammen og hylte som fru Sowerberry. Somme tider kjeftet de, men mest lo de. De drakk brennevin som karfolk, og de fjaste med både Fagin og guttene.<sup>49</sup>

Lavik elaborates on the way the two young women dress and behave, hinting at their occupation in a way which for example the Ex Libris edition does not: 'Bet og Nancy var ikke direkte pene, men de hadde svært røde kinn, som Oliver syntes så sunne ut'.<sup>50</sup> Here, the reference to their painted cheeks makes little sense when the other signs are missing. The Gyldendal edition goes a little further, and includes the little comment made by the narrator in

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<sup>47</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 100. 'She'll fall for it, he told himself [...] She's probably got a little fortune saved for a rainy day, the old hag. She'll have laid by at least 1000 Kroner every year, maybe even 1500 kroner too, for all I know. A little life insurance policy for Mr. Bumble, hm, hm, hm.'

<sup>49</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 54. 'They possessed an extraordinary amount of curled hair, and their dresses were so gaudy that you could spot them from miles away. The heels of their shoes were high as stilts, but they were unexpectedly worn, and the heels lay to one side. It looked as if they wore out their shoes by walking a lot along the streets. But they were handsome ladies, very easygoing, they didn't glare at you like Mrs. Mann did, and they didn't purse their lips and scream like Mrs. Sowerberry. Sometimes they yelled, but mostly they laughed. They drank spirits like men, and fooled around with Fagin and the boys'.

<sup>50</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Morten Jørgensen, p. 29. 'Bet and Nancy were not exactly pretty, but they had very red cheeks, which Oliver thought looked healthy'.

the original text: 'De var ikke videre elegante, håret var bustet og skoene slitte. Men de var rødmussete og friske. [...] De var muntre og freidige, og Oliver syntes det var riktig søte piker. Hvilket det ikke er noen tvil om at de var'.<sup>51</sup> Lavik later makes it perfectly clear that Nancy is a prostitute when she turns on Fagin: 'Her har jeg gått som tjuv og gatetøs for denne stinkende jødesatanen fra jeg var yngre enn Oliver er nå'.<sup>52</sup> The language used by Lavik here is very strong, even more so than in the translations aimed at adults.

While some editions have chosen to eliminate Mr. Grimwig altogether, Lavik has kept the character, but has changed certain parts of his behaviour. After hearing Mr. Bumble speak disparagingly about Oliver, Mr. Grimwig, in this translation, surprisingly comes to the boy's defence:

Du er for snar til å dra slutninger, Brownlow, påstod Grimwig. Fordi om Oliver ble borte med de pengene? [...] Gutten er nok bra han. Han var en bleikfis. Men han var iallefall ikke noen rabbagast. Det skal jeg vise deg, eller så skal jeg ete skallen min.<sup>53</sup>

In the original text, Grimwig's reaction to Mr. Bumble's account is the exact opposite: 'I knew it all along. Why didn't you take my advice in the beginning; you would, if he hadn't had a fever, I suppose, eh? He was interesting, wasn't he? Interesting! Bah!' (124) In addition to changing characters and events, Lavik sometimes adds new episodes to the narrative. One such incident is the short chapter describing how Mr. Bumble retrieved the gold locket which belonged to Oliver's mother from a pawnbroker:

Fru Bumble på sin side var litt i knipe. Denne arven etter gamle Sally, den hadde hun ikke tenkt å la noen få greie på. Men denne seddelen fra stampen... En dame kan ikke gå på en pantelånersjapp og spørre etter slike greier. Det må en mann til. [...] Det ble til at Bumble fikk lov til å gå ut likevel den ettermiddagen.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Hugo Gyllander, p. 37. 'They were not especially elegant, their hair was messy and their shoes worn. But they were red-cheeked and healthy [...] They were cheerful and audacious, and Oliver thought they were nice girls. Which no doubt they were'.

<sup>52</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 95. 'I've worked as a thief and streetwalker for this stinking Satan of a Jew since I was younger than Oliver is now'.

<sup>53</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 105. 'You jump to conclusions too quickly, Brownlow, claimed Grimwig. So what if Oliver disappeared with that money? [...] The boy is all right. He was a sickly looking thing. But he wasn't a rascal. I'll prove it, or I'll eat my head.'

<sup>55</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 199. 'For her part, Mrs. Bumble was in a bit of a scrape. This inheritance of old Sally's, she wasn't going to let anyone find out about that. But the receipt from the pawnbroker's... A lady can't go to a pawnbroker and ask about such matters. You need a man for that sort of thing [...] So it turned out that Mr. Bumble was allowed to go out that afternoon after all'.



In the original text, Mrs. Bumble simply tells Monks that she has redeemed the locket herself, and there is no account of the incident itself.

The Norwegian children's editions vary greatly in their treatment of Dickens's use of language. The Lavik translation takes a domesticating approach, using a range of Norwegian dialects and sociolects to reflect different speech patterns. Brown says that 'the ideal translator of Dickens into Norwegian should [...] possess a good ear for the local and regional dialects of Norway. Thus he would be able to find imaginative equivalents for the vulgar and provincial language spoken by many of Dickens's characters'.<sup>56</sup> A thorough knowledge of regional dialects would certainly give the translator a richer vocabulary to choose from, but I think it would still be challenging, if not impossible, to transfer the full range of connotations found in Dickens's language(s) into Norwegian. Among the translators, Lavik perhaps comes closest to Brown's ideal. Lavik clearly distinguishes between the higher and lower classes, as demonstrated by the following examples:

Du kan være sikker på at din mor var en guds engel, gutten min, sa herr Brownlow varmt. – Og nå skal vi ikke snakke mer om det. Nå tenker jeg det er best du hjelper fru Bedwin med å få tiden til å gå. Du kan jo spille litt casino med henne.<sup>57</sup>

Okk, kjære vene, langtifra, bekreftet fattigkjerringa. –Okk, gu nå oss, når hun har levd så lenge som eg har, og fødd 13 barn, død allesammen på to nær [...] så tenker eg hun snakker ikkje så snart om å død. No må du roe deg, søte venn, bare tenk på kor skjønt det er te være mor.<sup>58</sup>

Skjønneru ikke det da? Det er fordi jeg er så snåp til å skvette. Når spansera er der for å slå kloa i noen, så er jeg stokk sokk borte i en eneste blunk. Det er "Gjerdsmutten", seru. Finner alltid et høl, seru.<sup>59</sup>

The first of the above quotations is an example of how Mr. Brownlow's speaks: standardized Norwegian 'bokmål', or even the more conservative 'riksmål', with no elements of dialect.

The second quotation is from the woman who helps deliver Oliver: her language is very

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<sup>56</sup> James Wesley Brown, *Charles Dickens in Norway 1839-1912* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968), p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 81. 'You can be sure that your mother was a God's angel, my boy, said Mr. Brownlow warmly. We will not talk more about it now. I think it is best you help Mrs. Bedwin pass the time. You could play a little casino with her'.

<sup>58</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 8. The original text runs as follows: 'Lor bless her dear heart, when she has lived as long as I have, sir, and had thirteen children of her own, and all on 'em dead except two, and them in the wurkus with me, she'll know better than to take on in that way, bless her dear heart! Think what it is to be a mother, there's a dear young lamb, do' (18).

<sup>59</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 43. 'Don't you get it? It's because I can disappear so quickly. When the coppers come to catch someone, I'm gone in a flash. That's "Gjerdsmutten" for you, you see. Always find a gap, you see'.

different from that of Mr. Brownlow, with many dialect features such as the New Norwegian pronoun 'eg' instead of 'jeg'. The same lines are translated into standard Norwegian in the Gyldendal editions: 'Når hun har levd så lenge som jeg, og hatt tretten barn, og de elleve er døde, da vil hun nok forstå hvilken lykke det er å være mor'.<sup>60</sup> The third example demonstrates the particular cant used by the Artful Dodger, or Gjerdesmutter, as he is called in this version. His language is littered with slang words and contracted forms such as 'seru'. Except for the Lavik translation, the other editions render all dialogue in the same language, bokmål, even that of the Artful Dodger and his friends. The result is a less marked difference between the high and low characters, and the significance of having Oliver speak a dialect-free language, thereby placing him in the middle- or upper-middleclass sections of society, is lost.

As a final example of how the various translations differ, I have chosen to focus on the concluding paragraphs of the novel. These are slightly dissimilar in each edition and in some cases reflect the intended audience of a particular version. Here is, first, an excerpt from the last page of the original text:

I have said that they were truly happy; and without strong affection, and humanity of heart, and gratitude to that Being whose code is Mercy, and whose great attribute is Benevolence to all things that breathe, true happiness can never be attained. Within the altar of the old village church, there stands a white marble tablet, which bears as yet but one word, - 'Agnes!' There is no coffin in that tomb; and may it be many, many years, before another name is placed above it! (360)

The narrator goes on to describe how he believes the spirit of Agnes sometimes returns to that place, ending his story with these words: 'I believe it none the less, because that nook is in a Church, and she was weak and erring.' The Ex Libris edition, as before, stays closer to the original text than the other translations:

Man kunne fortelle meget om hvordan Rose Maylie blomstret opp som en ung og yndig hustru, og om hvordan Oliver fikk stadig store kunnskaper og mer og mer kom til å ligne på sin far, herr Brownlows kjære ungdomsvenn. Men det er ikke nødvendig å si alt dette. Det er nok å si at de i sannhet var lykkelige.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Hugo Gyllander, p. 6. 'When she has lived as long as I have, and had thirteen children, of which eleven are dead, then she'll understand what a joy it is to be a mother'.

<sup>62</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Morten Jørgensen, p. 129. 'One could have said much about how Rose Maylie blossomed into a young and graceful wife, and how Oliver was filled with knowledge and came to resemble his

However, the translator has left out the last part, about Agnes and the village church. The Gyldendal versions and two of the picture book editions, however, choose to focus on Oliver's mother:

Ved alteret i den gamle landsbykirken ble det satt en kvit marmortavle, der det stod ett eneste ord: *Agnes*. Og så begynte et helt nytt liv for Oliver. For hvert år som gikk, forekom livet i fattighuset og i forbryterreiret ham mere og mere som en ond drøm.<sup>63</sup>

Norsk Kunstnerforlag gives us this version:

Oliver og vennene hans levde lykkelige i den lille landsbyen. Innenfor alterringen i den gamle kirken er det en marmortavle hvor det står et eneste ord: Agnes. Dit går Oliver ofte, og noen ganger føler han at moren han aldri traff, kan se ham og høre det han sier.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, the Skandinavisk Presse edition ends with the following paragraph:

Nær alteret i den gamle bykirken ble det risset inn et ord på en enkel minneplate – navnet AGNES. Av og til følte Oliver en iling av sorg over at han ikke hadde sett verken sin mor eller far, men hans hjerte fyltes av glede og takknemlighet når han tenkte på herr Brownlow og Rose.<sup>65</sup>

The picture book versions are more sentimental than the Gyldendal edition: in the Norsk Kunstnerforlag version Oliver feels that his mother can hear him, while in the Skandinavisk Presse edition he thinks sorrowfully about the parents he never knew. The Luther Forlag edition does not mention Agnes, but its version of the ending is similarly emotional:

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father, Mr. Brownlow's dear friend, more and more. But it is not necessary to say all this. It is enough to say that they were truly happy'.

<sup>63</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Hugo Gylander, p. 170. 'Next to the altar in the old village church a white marble tablet was placed, on which was written a single word: Agnes. And so began a whole new life for Oliver. With every passing year his life in the workhouse and in the thieves' den seemed more and more like an old nightmare'.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Unni Evang (Oslo: Norsk Kunstnerforlag, 1976), p. 29. 'Oliver and his friends lived happily in the little village. Within the altar rail there is a marble tablet on which a single word is written: Agnes. Oliver comes there often, and sometimes he feels that the mother he never knew can see and hear him there'.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Oddrun Lyngstad (Oslo: Skandinavisk Presse, 1985), p. [27]. 'Near the altar in the old town church a single word was carved onto a simple memorial tablet: the name Agnes. Sometimes Oliver felt a wave of grief was over him at the thought of never having known his mother and father, but his heart was filled with joy and gratitude when he thought of Mr. Brownlow and Rose'.

Herr Brownlow sørget for Olivers undervisning, og dag for dag økte guttens kunnskaper og innsikt. Samtidig økte deres hengivenhet for hverandre, og de kom til å stå hverandre meget nær. Slik ble en liten gruppe mennesker knyttet sammen i kjærighet takket være en liten gutt ved navn Oliver Twist. De fikk oppleve lykken i så rik målestokk som det bare er få forunt i denne omskiftelige verden.<sup>66</sup>

Lavik's translation chooses a different solution by ending immediately after Oliver and Mr. Brownlow have visited Fagin in prison. As they are walking away, Mr. Brownlow tells Oliver that he must try to forget about the past and instead think of his new life with his new friends:

Herr Brownlow fikk både rett og urett. En lykkelig liten gutt ble Oliver, og et lykkelig menneske ble han siden. Men så lykkelig ble han heldigvis aldri at han glemte hvordan det er å ha det ondt.<sup>67</sup>

The last sentence is somewhat ambiguous: the word 'heldigvis' (fortunately) could be read as a wry comment by the narrator rather than as a sentimental statement.

## Conclusion

Most of the Norwegian editions of *Oliver Twist* are aimed at children or young adults, and function more like adaptations than conventional translations. In all of these editions, the text has been rewritten and abridged to suit the intended audience, and the language has been modernized and simplified. A few versions fall into the picture book category, with illustrations on every page spread and very little text. Some contain a few illustrations, while others have no illustrations at all. Most of the children's editions average around 120-160 pages, which corresponds roughly to one fourth of the unabridged 1935 translation published by Nasjonalforlaget. Broadly speaking, these texts retain only the bare bones of the original plot, without most of the descriptions, reflections and irony found in Dickens's text. The focus is on action, which is not surprising considering the fact that these books were often published as part of series aimed at young boys.

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<sup>66</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Ellen Marie Hansen, p. 63. 'Mr. Brownlow saw to Oliver's education, and day by day the boy's knowledge and insights grew. Their affection for each other grew too, and they came to be very close. In this way a small group of people became lovingly attached to each other thanks to a small boy called Oliver Twist. They experienced a happiness so great that only a few can ever hope to achieve it in this flighty world.'

<sup>67</sup> *Oliver Twist*, trans. by Herbrand Lavik, p. 262. 'Mr. Brownlow turned out to be both right and wrong. Oliver became a happy little boy, and later a happy adult. However, he fortunately never became so happy that he forgot how it felt to be miserable'.

There is wide variation between the different editions: from the Lavik translation, which changes the plot much more than any other version, to the Ex Libris edition, which often stays surprisingly close to the original text. The translators tend most often to omit certain events or characters which are not vital to the plot or which are difficult to understand because the original context is lost. Most of the editions attempt to soften some of the more violent episodes, such as the murder of Nancy. The Lavik translation is an exception, and goes to the other extreme, making the murder more brutal and graphic than in the original. The material features and paratexts surrounding the text emphasise the novel's status as a work for children: when *Oliver Twist* is published as part of the 'Gyldendals Gode Guttebøker' series, it is obvious that Dickens's novel has come a long way since it was first published in *Bentley's Miscellany*. The various notes on the text included in most of the children's editions reveal a strong tendency towards biographical readings of *Oliver Twist*. Naturally, none of the children's editions includes any of the original paratexts, such as the introduction written by Dickens himself, or the original drawings by Cruikshank.

The frequency at which new editions were published increased slightly during the 1980s and 1990s. It is difficult to say why, but it could perhaps be a result of the success of the musical version of *Oliver Twist*. Gyldendal's launch of a new series of classic works for young adults alone accounts for three of the seven editions published during this period. Some of the children's versions have been published up to six times, using the same translation with very few changes made to the text. In fact, Gyldendal still uses a translation from 1950 as the basis for new editions. Sonja Hagemann feared that children would 'lose respect for the book as a work of art when they discover with what ease the abridgers not only excise text, but also change names, indicators of time, family relationships and so on'.<sup>68</sup> The question is perhaps whether children would ever discover this, since they would probably not be familiar with Dickens's original text. In her 1959 book *Evige venner: klassisk litteratur i et nøtteskall*, literary critic Eugenia Kielland devoted a chapter to Dickens and *David Copperfield*. She pointed out that many people feel they know Dickens's work from school, but questioned their knowledge of the original work: 'It is true that *David Copperfield* in the abridged version is more or less a children's book, but unabridged [...] it is most certainly a book for adults.'<sup>69</sup> This assertion aside, it would seem that Dickens's Norwegian reputation as an author of children's books was already well on its way to being established at this time. Things had not changed much when thirty years later, author Erik Fosnes Hansen was horrified to find that

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<sup>68</sup> Hagemann, p. 299.

<sup>69</sup> Eugenia Kielland, *Evige venner: klassisk litteratur i et nøtteskall* (Oslo, 1959), p. 23.

Norwegian bookshops only sold abridged children's versions of a number of classic novels.<sup>70</sup> As to the future of *Oliver Twist*, further survival in Norway may at least in part be dependent on other forms of adaptation: the ever popular film, television drama and, not least, musical versions.

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<sup>70</sup> Erik Fosnes Hansen, 'Hva lærer vi om klassikere når vi lærer å lese?', *Aftenposten*, 23 December 1989.

## Chapter 3: Afterlives

### Introduction

I will begin, then, with Dickens and film. Yes, and why not Dickens and circus, ice-skating or any other form of entertainment? For the fact is that Dickens must be one of the most highly adapted figures in the whole of literature, a process that began before his first smash hit was even finished.<sup>1</sup>

From beginning to end, the mutual influence of stage and screen is illustrated in the making of Dickens dramas. Actresses step back and forth between the two media. Playwrights become screenwriters. Plays become films. [...] For the cinema has never established a monopoly on “Dickens dramas”. Rather, a kind of vast free market of versions *Oliver Twist* has long existed.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will examine a particular segment of what H. Philip Bolton here refers to as the ‘vast free market’, namely the Norwegian reception of the many adaptations of *Oliver Twist*. As Grahame Smith points out in the first quotation, these have taken on a variety of forms, although we have yet to see an ‘Oliver On Ice’ in this country. Theatre versions, musicals, films and television series have been, and still are, the main forms of adaptation available to the Norwegian public. I do not propose to discuss the adaptations themselves, but rather the responses they have generated in the Norwegian press. I have attempted to cover a variety of such responses, including reviews of films and theatre versions, theatre programmes and newspaper articles. My analysis seeks to address a number of questions: What do these comments say about the attitude towards *Oliver Twist* in particular, and Dickens in general? What kind of judgements do the reviewers make, and what are the underlying premises for such judgements? The first part of this chapter deals with Norwegian theatre and musical adaptations of *Oliver Twist*, while the second part is concerned with film and television versions of the novel.

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<sup>1</sup> Grahame Smith, *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> H. Philip Bolton, *Dickens Dramatized* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1987), p. 106.

## **‘As good as a play’**

Writing in 1987, H. Philip Bolton said that ‘in our own era, the live stage has once again become the main dramatic medium of *Oliver*’s survival.’<sup>3</sup> The novel’s successful return to the stage came with Lionel Bart’s hugely popular musical version of Dickens’s novel, simply called *Oliver!*, which was first performed in London’s West End in 1960, and was staged on Broadway three years later. It was the first big success for the British musical industry after a long period of having been overshadowed by Broadway productions.<sup>4</sup> The musical has been revived several times, most recently in London in 2010 with Rowan Atkinson as Fagin. In addition, it has been performed in other countries by both professional and amateur groups. *Oliver!* was first performed in Norway on 8 March 1991 by Bærum Barneteater, a non-professional children’s theatre, and a successful professional staging by Familieteatret at Chateau Neuf in Oslo followed the year after.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the musical seems to have grown in popularity, with a number of productions by amateur groups, children’s theatres and choirs around the country. Among the larger productions have been those by Fyllingsdalen Nye Teater (1999), Risør musikkteater (2000), Tut & kjær (2000), Bagabu Ungdomslag, Steinkjær (2003), Agder Teater (2004), Sandnes Kulturhus (2009) and Kongsvinger amatørteater (2009).

Although most stage versions of *Oliver Twist* have been variations on Bart’s musical, some recent productions have chosen a different take. In 2007, Teater Ibsen performed a version of *Oliver Twist* based on a 1989 play by Jeremy Brock. Teater Ibsen collaborated with Skien Kulturskole, whose pupils played the children’s parts and performed with the orchestra. The play was a success with a total of 4088 tickets sold.<sup>6</sup> A year later, Sogn and Fjordane Teater staged an ambitious rewriting of Dickens’s novel which won critical acclaim. This production, along with the 1992 musical by Familieteatret, will be discussed in detail below.

## **‘Never before has a boy wanted more’**

The first professional production of *Oliver!*, by Familieteatret A/S, premiered in 1992 at Chateau Neuf in Oslo. The company had successfully staged the Broadway musical *Annie* in

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<sup>3</sup> Bolton, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> Bolton, p. 107; Michael Pointer, *Charles Dickens on the Screen* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Hektisk før “Oliver” i Sandvika’, *Aftenposten*, 11 February 1991; ‘Glede og gru i Bærum Barneteater’, *Aftenposten*, 8 March 1991.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Teaterår over gjennomsnittet’, *Nationen*, 24 January 2008.



1991, and chose to continue the orphan theme with Bart's version of *Oliver Twist*. Many of the cast and crew from *Annie* were also hired for *Oliver!*; Daniel Bohr was the director, and Harald Tusberg translated the songs and dialogue into Norwegian. The show was built on the original London production by Larry Oaks, and well-known Norwegian actors Rolv Wesenlund, Elsa Lystad and Harald Heide-Steen jr. played the principal parts. Close to 600 young boys auditioned for the part of Oliver, which finally went to Eirik Espolin-Johnson and Julius G. Mørk.<sup>7</sup> *Oliver!* was cited as a natural successor to *Annie* and its appeal as a family show was often emphasized.

The theatre programme included a short biography of Charles Dickens, in addition to information about Bart's original production, the cast and the Norwegian song lyrics. In this section, several claims were made about Dickens, ranging from typical observations like 'Dickens is characteristic of the Victorian period', to statements less grounded in facts: 'Dickens, like Ludvig Holberg, experienced a "poetic rapture" in which writing flowed from his hand at an incredible speed.' This is clearly a romanticized idea of the creative genius at work, and hardly correlates very closely with a more tangible reality, which was that Dickens had taken on too much work and was struggling hard to meet the demands of his publishers.<sup>8</sup> Harald Tusberg, who translated the dialogue and lyrics into Norwegian, said that '*Oliver!* contains 22 musical numbers which Charles Dickens has never heard. Half of the show and much of the remaining dialogue comes from Bart, but has been painstakingly recreated in the spirit of Dickens.' It is of course rather unclear exactly what the producers mean when they say 'in the spirit of Dickens'.

Such a large-scale professional production naturally generated a lot of media interest. In one of the first newspaper articles about the musical, Oliver was described as a boy from an orphanage (barnehjemsgutt) and the story was said to take place in the 1850s, a perhaps somewhat surprising fact, since the novel was published in the late 1830s.<sup>9</sup> Subsequent articles continually referred to the workhouse as an orphanage, perhaps with the memory of *Annie* still fresh in the journalists' minds.<sup>10</sup> An article in *Aftenposten* claimed that 'the plot of *Oliver!* should be familiar to most people', and recounted the action as it appeared in the musical, ending with Oliver being adopted by 'a kind, rich man who happens to be his

<sup>7</sup> 'Oliver kommer', NTB, 8 September 1992.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance chapter 4 on the creation of *Oliver Twist* in Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> Sølvi Wærhaug Bo Mathisen, 'Topp-musikal endelig til Norge', *Verdens Gang*, 14 February 1992, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance Sølvi Wærhaug, 'Elsa med tre roller i "Oliver"', *Verdens Gang*, 19 February 1992, p. 46.

grandfather'.<sup>11</sup> The rich man is Mr. Brownlow, who in the novel is not Oliver's grandfather, but an old friend of his father. Plot summaries tended to focus on the first part of the story, where Oliver was first made an apprentice to Mr. Sowerberry and later escaped to London and joined Fagin's gang. Both articles mention Dickens, but do not attempt to provide any background information about the author, the original text or the context in which it was published.

In an interview printed in *Verdens Gang*, Bohr talked about the contemporary appeal of Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. While negotiating the contract in London, he had noticed that the streets were full of homeless people, and in this article he describes them as 'the poor boy Oliver Twist's descendants, victims of a failed social system'.<sup>12</sup> Rolv Wesenlund, the actor who played Mr Bumble, also noted the relevance of *Oliver Twist* today, claiming that 'Dickens is still relevant when we consider the abuse suffered by children around the world. Children without rights.'<sup>13</sup> The same point was made in a later article.<sup>14</sup> Wesenlund admitted that the production had to 'soften' his character and present him as less evil in order to make the story more appropriate for children. However, Elsa Lystad, who played Mrs. Corney, urged the public not to underestimate children and their ability to tolerate potentially frightening material.

In an interview with Harald Heide-Steen jr., who played Fagin, *Oliver Twist* is described as 'Dickens's classic social critique describing the poverty and criminal underworld of 19<sup>th</sup> century London'.<sup>15</sup> Heide-Steen admitted that he had not seen the musical abroad, but said that he had watched the film *Oliver*, with Alec Guinness as Fagin. Here, he must be confusing David Lean's 1948 film, called *Oliver Twist*, with Carol Reed's film version of the musical. In the latter, the role of Nancy was played by singer Ellen Nicolaysen, who had become one of the most popular musical stars in the early 1990s with roles such as Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* and Polly in *The Beggar's Opera*. In an article about Nicolaysen and her success, it was claimed that 'in spite of her miserable life [Nancy] has never lost her optimism and capacity for love. Her enduring wish is to be pure and good, but she is abused by the man she loves.'<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether this assessment is made by Nicolaysen, or by Mona Levin, the author of the article. Nancy's background as a prostitute was not referred to.

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<sup>11</sup> Hilde Bjørhovde, 'Bohr klar for "Oliver"', *Aftenposten*, 13 February 1992, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Klaes Krog, 'Daniel Bohr setter opp *Oliver Twist*', *Verdens Gang*, 17 February 1992, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Stein Østbø, 'Latterlig ondskap', *Verdens Gang*, 28 July 1992, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Espen A. Hansen, 'Ingen nerver hos Oliver', *Verdens Gang*, 14 September 1992, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Sølvi Wærhaug, 'Tyvenes konge', *Verdens Gang*, 20 February 1992, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Mona Levin, 'Stjernerollene står i kø for musical-Ellen', *Aftenposten*, 21 February 1992, p. 3.

‘*Oliver!* is based on some of the best writing English culture has to offer, namely Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*,’ claimed *Aftenposten*’s Kaja Korsvold.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the articles written in connection with the staging of the musical barely mentioned Dickens and the context in which he wrote. However, Geir Uthaug, author, translator and critic, wrote a lengthy piece in *Aftenposten* called ‘Dickens’ sosiale dokument’ which dealt with the background and reception of *Oliver Twist*.<sup>18</sup> According to Uthaug, someone reading the novel as a child would focus on the dramatic qualities of the text, whereas a later re-reading would reveal other aspects, for instance Dickens’s satirical qualities. Uthaug briefly described early attempts to bring the novel to the stage and screen, before giving an account of the history of Bart’s musical version. In a strongly biographical reading of the novel, he rooted Dickens’s protest against an unjust and inhumane social system in the author’s childhood experiences of debt and poverty. He also noted the musical’s tendency to portray the criminal characters as benign and exciting, as opposed to the stark and often frightening realities of the novel. Dickens himself drew attention to the fact that in fiction, criminals were often portrayed with ‘certain allurements and fascinations [...] thrown around them’, and made it clear that this was not his intention in *Oliver Twist*.<sup>19</sup> Instead, he wanted to ‘show things as they really are’.

### **‘The boys are pickpockets, and the girl is a prostitute’**

In 2007, Sogn og Fjordane Teater made an unusual appeal, asking the public to decide which play the company should choose for their next production. The choice was between *Oliver Twist* and *The Jungle Book*, and the former won with 60 per cent of the votes.<sup>20</sup> The result was an ambitious and innovative new play based on Dickens’s novel, which, unlike other productions, used only adult actors, and incorporated puppets of various sizes into the action. The script was written and performed in New Norwegian, and new music was written especially for the play. The production premiered on 19 September 2008 in Førde, and was played in 21 places throughout the county of Sogn og Fjordane.<sup>21</sup> It received superlative

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<sup>17</sup> Kaja Korsvold, ‘Sikker “Oliver”-suksess’, *Aftenposten*, 9 March 1992, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Geir Uthaug, ‘*Oliver Twist*: Dickens’ sosiale dokument’, *Aftenposten* (Amagasinet), 12 September 1992, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Dickens, ‘The Author’s Preface to the Third Edition’, in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Velg selv’, *Verdens Gang*, 23 April 2007, p. 36; ‘Ny satsing på gammel oppsetjing’, *Bergens Tidende*, 23 January 2008, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Storsatsing på *Oliver Twist*’, *Verdens Gang*, 7 September 2008, p. 37; ‘Dickens herlige klassiker’, *Verdens Gang*, 14 September 2008, p. 23.

reviews, and was praised as a fresh take on the classic story. Critic Astrid Kolbjørnsen of *Bergens Tidende* applauded the use of puppets and the decision to incorporate an accordion-playing narrator.<sup>22</sup> The review in *Verdens Gang* noted that the social critique of Dickens's novel might not carry over to the audience of today, who are usually left with a teary-eyed story of an orphaned boy tormented by adults.<sup>23</sup> This version, however, did not give in to pure sentimentality, but stayed faithful to Dickens. *Dagbladets* Inger Merete Hobbelstad was not wholly enthusiastic about the use of puppets, but conceded that in some parts they did add another dimension to the action on stage.<sup>24</sup>

The theatre programme stressed the production's serious take on *Oliver Twist* by relating the fate of poor children in Victorian London to the troubles faced by Norwegian children today. Theatre director Terje Lyngstad emphasized that although Norwegian children may not have to become criminals in order to survive, they face other troubles, like not having enough money to keep up with more successful families, and should be able to relate to Oliver's struggles. About Charles Dickens and his childhood, dramatic adviser Bodil Kvamme, somewhat freely, wrote that 'his father spent all their money on parties' and was therefore sent to debtors' prison. Kvamme noted that although Dickens brought his childhood experiences into his writing, *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* are not autobiographical novels. She also pointed out that Dickens may have chosen to portray Oliver as unspoilt and innocent for a particular reason, to show that the adults cannot corrupt him. 'Dickens shows the strength that lies in a small child', she observed. This sentiment echoes Dickens's own words in the introduction to the third edition of *Oliver Twist*: 'I wished to show, in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last.'<sup>25</sup>

In addition to providing information about the play, the programme included a note under the heading 'Art can make a difference' by the then Minister of Children and Equality, Anniken Huitfeldt. Like Lyngstad, Huitfeldt used the story of Oliver as a starting point for a discussion of the difficulties facing Norwegian children today. She went on to elevate the play from being mere entertainment to having political significance:

Children can make a difference. *Oliver Twist* does. This is why it is so important that *Oliver Twist* is being performed today. It demonstrates how art and culture can inspire

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<sup>22</sup> Astrid Kolbjørnsen, 'Grådig god og grå Oliver Twist', *Bergens Tidende*, 20 September 2008, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Astrid Sletbakk, 'Olivers gode hjelpere', *Verdens Gang*, 22 September 2008, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> Inger Merete Hobbelstad, 'Støvete magi', *Dagbladet*, 23 September 2008, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Dickens, 'The Author's Preface to the Third Edition', p. 3.

politics and change. Charles Dickens made people aware of the conditions suffered by the poor in England. And his books helped to change the situation. Today, art has the power to set the political agenda and spark debates, just as Dickens did in the 1830s.

Exactly how *Oliver Twist* ‘made a difference’ is not explained. Using *Oliver Twist* as evidence, Huitfeldt tries to convince the audience that art is important, in anticipation, it might seem with hindsight, of her current role as Minister of Culture. This view of art is idealistic and utilitarian, and perhaps fails to appreciate that as much as Dickens desired to make his readers aware of social injustice, he also wanted to entertain them.

### **‘Never judge a book by its movie’**

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Norwegians increasingly came to associate Dickens with film and TV versions of his novels. As *Aftenposten*’s film critic Per Haddal noted in 1987: ‘for the Norwegian public, Dickens probably lives on best in front of the camera’.<sup>27</sup> This is not a purely Norwegian phenomenon; John Glavin, in the introduction to *Dickens on Screen*, goes so far as to say that ‘the Dickens film now shapes Dickens’s fiction’.<sup>28</sup> Whether one agrees with this statement or not, it is obvious that Dickens and film is a powerful combination, and one that is here to stay. The rest of this chapter will examine the Norwegian reception of some of the best known Dickens adaptations for the screen.

Dickens’s novels and stories have spawned more films than those of any other author, with over 130 Dickens films on record.<sup>29</sup> Dickens has done well on television too, and the dramas produced by the BBC soon became known as the best Dickens adaptations available. The BBC versions of *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit* and *Bleak House* received particular acclaim in Norway. It is perhaps no coincidence that Dickens should be especially suited to this particular medium; after all, his novels originally appeared in monthly, sometimes weekly, parts. According to Smith, the television serial embodies the same kind of ‘repetition with variation’:

A monthly part – embedded in a commercial context and with the visual attractions of its unchanging cover and varied illustrations – is obviously inhabiting a similar

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<sup>27</sup> Per Haddal, ‘Filmens far og TV-serienes bestefar’, *Aftenposten*, 7 February 1987.

<sup>28</sup> John Glavin, ‘Introduction’, in *Dickens on Screen*, ed. by John Glavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-8 (p. 5).

<sup>29</sup> Joss Marsh, ‘Dickens and Film’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 204-222 (p. 204).

cultural context to the television series, and seriality may well be a factor in any attempt to account for the phenomenon of adaptation.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the most important film versions of *Oliver Twist* that have been shown in Norway are *Oliver Twist*, directed by Frank Lloyd (1922); *Oliver Twist*, directed by David Lean (1948); *Oliver!*, directed by Carol Reed (1968); *Oliver and Company*, Walt Disney (1988); and *Oliver Twist*, directed by Roman Polanski (2005). Apart from the 1922 silent film, all the films have been shown on television as well as in cinemas. A BBC mini-series of *Oliver Twist* was, furthermore, shown in 2008.

There have also been various animated films and series for children, for instance the TV series *Escape of the Artful Dodger* (2002), but as these have not generated a lot of media response, I have chosen not to discuss them here. There is one exception, which at least deserves mention, namely the animated Disney version of *Oliver Twist* which premiered on Norwegian cinema in November 1989. The film, in which Oliver is an orphaned kitten taken in by a gang of stray dogs, was well received by critics and the general public alike. Haddal called the film charming, and predicted that it would appeal greatly to children.<sup>31</sup> He was right: the film was the fifth most visited during the Christmas of 1989 with 1926 tickets sold, and ranked in sixth place on the Box Office charts a few weeks later with 4373 visitors.<sup>32</sup> Haddal later wrote that the ‘smart, modernized Disney version’ might be just as successful as Reed’s *Oliver!*.<sup>33</sup> *Verdens Gang*’s Borghild Maaland agreed, noting that the film offered great entertainment and was packed with clever details.<sup>34</sup> Before I examine the responses to other, more serious adaptations of *Oliver Twist*, I will briefly describe some key issues of adaptation theory, in order better to understand the underlying premises for the judgements made by the reviewers.

Most theories concerning adaptation address the basic question of whether it is worthwhile, or even possible, to study screen adaptations in the same way as one studies literature. Supporters of the medium-specific approach would claim that the answer is no, arguing that ‘most (if not all) of the textual characteristics of the novel cannot be recreated on film or television, because these characteristics arise from the verbal form of the written

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Per Haddal, ‘Sjarmant tegnefilm’, *Aftenposten*, 30 November 1989, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Filmtoppen’, *Aftenposten*, 30 December 1989; ‘Filmtoppen’, *Aftenposten*, 13 January 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Per Haddal, ‘Nyttårsaften: Manndomsprøven’, *Aftenposten*, 30 December 1989, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Borghild Maaland, ‘Sjarmerende pusekatt’, *Verdens Gang*, 1 December 1989, p. 43.

text.’<sup>35</sup> The comparative approach, however, assumes that there are more similarities than differences between a novel and a film, and that a comparison of the two different art forms and media is possible. The main thrust of the comparative approach is to look for ‘ways in which the same narrative is told using different conventions’.<sup>36</sup>

Fidelity is a key issue when discussing adaptations, and, as will be seen in some of the reviews discussed below, adaptations are often criticized for not being faithful to the original text. According to Brian McFarlane such a view is limiting and should be avoided, because ‘fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the texts as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct ‘meaning’ which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with.’<sup>37</sup> A film or TV series is simply one out of many possible readings of a novel, with all such readings being, in principle, equally valid. In order to get around the issue of fidelity, some critics have suggested different categories of adaptations according to how the director relates to the source, without giving faithful adaptations a privileged position. Geoffrey Wagner identifies three categories of adaptation, ranging from more faithful to less faithful: transposition, commentary and analogy.<sup>38</sup> Within this system, the BBC adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, for instance, would fall within the first category.<sup>39</sup> McFarlane distinguishes between ‘what may be *transferred* from one narrative medium to another and to what necessarily requires *adaptation proper*’.<sup>40</sup> The basic events of the narrative belong to the former category, while the narrator is an example of the latter: a device which cannot be directly transferred, but which must be represented through different equivalences in the film. When a novel is adapted for film, the latter is normally regarded as secondary, a by-product of the former. However, the effect of the adaptation upon the adapted text should not be ignored, as Glavin pointed out. This idea becomes physically manifest in the 1949 Dreyer edition of *Oliver Twist*, in which the original Cruikshank illustrations have been replaced with photographs from the 1948 David Lean film.

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<sup>35</sup> Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Cardwell, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), p. 222.

<sup>39</sup> It could perhaps be argued that TV-series are generally more faithful than film versions, given that they have more screen time at their disposal and therefore less need to omit scenes and so on.

<sup>40</sup> McFarlane, p. 13.

### **‘All looks were fixed upon one man – the Jew’**

David Lean’s *Oliver Twist* is generally regarded as one of the best Dickens films ever made. However, the film was controversial in the years after its release in 1948 because of what was considered an anti-Semitic portrayal of Fagin. It was banned in Israel, and was not shown in the United States for three years after its initial release in England.<sup>41</sup> Lean had used Cruikshank’s illustrations as the basis for his Fagin, but, says Joss Marsh, ‘where Lean relied heavily on Cruikshank instead of Dickens, it was with disastrous effect’.<sup>42</sup> Lean’s first Dickens adaptation, *Great Expectations*, was very well received in Norway.<sup>43</sup> Reviews of Lean’s *Oliver Twist* were published in at least seven major Norwegian newspapers after it premiered in November 1948.

A recurring question in the reviews was whether Lean had stayed true to Dickens or not. Most of the reviewers, in other words, judged the film according to its perceived faithfulness to the original novel. According to the reviewer in the Christian newspaper *Vårt Land*, readers of the novel would be captured anew by Dickens’s world when watching the film, which contained the same ‘heart-warming ingredients’ and the ‘strange mixture of shocking brutality and compassion’.<sup>44</sup> The reviewer remarked that Dickens had been seen as too sentimental and exaggerated, but went on to defend him, arguing that ‘the amount of detail he put into his sketches bear witness to a man who knew a great deal about human beings, especially those who fell outside the law.’ A review in *Nationen* commented on the link between Dickens and the cinema, stating that Dickens’s novels made excellent material for the black and white art of film.<sup>45</sup> The mixture of realism and fairytale, which the reviewer felt was typical of Dickens, was handled well by the director. Dickens was also cited as a writer who cultivated contrasts. In a rather reductive reading of Dickens’s character, the critic stated that ‘Dickens was a simple and genuine person who understood children. He shared their feelings and he loved them’.

Among the more critical voices was *Morgenbladet*, which published its review under the heading: ‘*Oliver Twist* the film suffers from the same weaknesses as the book.’<sup>47</sup> The critic noted that the film had obviously been made ‘in the spirit of Dickens’, but this was not

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<sup>41</sup> Pointer, p. 68.

<sup>42</sup> Marsh, p. 218.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance the anonymous review of *Store forventninger* in *Verdens Gang*, 14 October 1952.

<sup>44</sup> F.V.S., ‘Review: *Oliver Twist*’, *Vårt Land*, 24 November 1948.

<sup>45</sup> F. Ro., ‘Review: *Oliver Twist*’, *Nationen*, 23 November 1948.

<sup>47</sup> Anonymous review, ‘*Oliver Twist*’, *Morgenbladet*, 23 November 1948.



be understood as a commendation, as he went on to argue that Lean's film depended too much on the novel, resulting in 'naïve and simplistic characterization' and unrealistic scenes. The ideal here is obviously realism, which was clearly the dominant literary trend at the time. Writing only a few years later, Graham Greene said that 'it is a mistake to think of *Oliver Twist* as a realistic story: only late in his career did Dickens learn to write realistically of human beings.'<sup>48</sup> The conservative newspaper *Aftenposten* was not as critical of the novel, but maintained that 'the film has lost some of the warmth found in the book', and that what remained vague in the text became too harsh when transferred to the screen.<sup>49</sup> The reviewer lamented the fact that having seen the film, the audience could no longer use their imagination to picture the novel. He invoked the issue of fidelity in accusing Lean of putting too much emphasis on action during the last half of the film, consequently deviating from 'the story of *Oliver Twist* as told by Dickens'. The critic clearly expected certain things from a Dickens film, and action was not one of them. *Dagbladet*'s critic felt that Dickens's approach to social reform had become unfashionable: 'we are meant to feel sorry for Oliver because he is of "high birth", while the criminal underworld is headed for well-deserved ruin.'<sup>50</sup> He forgot that the audience is meant to feel compassion for Nancy and some of the lesser criminals.

Most of the reviewers, though not all, commented on the anti-Semitic portrayal of Fagin, as played by Alec Guinness. The official newspaper of the Norwegian Communist Party, *Friheten*, observed how a negative, stereotypical character often comes to represent a people or faith, and noted that Lean's film could 'cause unnecessary damage'.<sup>51</sup> This sentiment was shared by the commentator in *Vårt Land*, who saw Fagin as the only flaw in the film. *Dagbladet*, one of the most outspoken anti-Nazi papers in Norway at the start of the Second World War,<sup>52</sup> did not go as far as some of the other newspapers in condemning the anti-Semitism, but noted that 'Fagin has been fitted with an outsized nose to show how evil Jews are'. *Morgenbladet* noted that the film had been banned in Israel, and included a quotation from the *Palestine Post* where the journalist asked why the book had not also been banned, to which *Morgenbladet* ironically replied 'this is what happens when impressionable minds are exposed to too much indoctrination and propaganda.'<sup>53</sup> *Verdens Gang* praised

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<sup>48</sup> Graham Greene, 'The Young Dickens', in *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Fred Kaplan (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 426-432 (p. 428).

<sup>49</sup> Rey., 'Review: *Oliver Twist*', *Aftenposten*, 23 November 1948.

<sup>50</sup> G.L., 'Review: *Oliver Twist*', *Dagbladet*, 23 November 1948.

<sup>51</sup> ABC., 'Review: *Oliver Twist*', *Friheten*, 23 November 1948.

<sup>52</sup> 'Dagbladet', in *Norsk Presses Historie 1660-2010*, ed. by Hans Fredrik Dahl, 4 vols (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2010), IV, p. 73.

<sup>53</sup> *Morgenbladet*, 23 November 1948.

Guinness's interpretation of Fagin, and did not mention the anti-Semitic stereotyping.<sup>54</sup> The critics seemed to agree that the technical qualities of the film were excellent, and that Lean had succeeded in bringing Victorian London to life on the screen. John Howard Davies as Oliver was praised in all the reviews, and *Aftenposten* went so far as to claim that if *Oliver Twist* were to become as popular as *Great Expectations*, it would be due to Davies' performance.

### **'You've got to pick a pocket or two'**

The film version based on Bart's musical was first shown in the Norwegian cinema Colosseum on Boxing Day 1968. An article published in *Verdens Gang* on Christmas Eve brought news of the film, and described *Oliver Twist* as 'Dickens's most famous character (except for Pickwick?)'.<sup>56</sup> The journalist called the story a 'Cinderella tale' concerned mainly with 'the search for love', and as in many theatre versions and film reviews, Oliver was said to have grown up in an orphanage, not a workhouse. The article went on to claim that *Oliver Twist* 'marked the start of a development which would lead to less misery for the poor', and asserted that Dickens's novel was still relevant in 1968. According to the author of the article this was the third time *Oliver Twist* had been filmed, the other two adaptations being Frank Lloyd's 1922 version and Lean's 1948 film. He seems not to have been aware of other films based on the novel, such as the American adaptation from 1933 starring Dickie Moore as Oliver.

*Verdens Gang* gave the film the highest rating and urged people to see it on the basis of both its entertainment value and its artistic qualities.<sup>57</sup> *Dagbladet* critic Arvid Andersen was equally enthusiastic, and credited Reed with making a 'cheerful, yet satirical' film in the style of *The Beggar's Opera*. Making a musical based on *Oliver Twist* had been thought to be impossible, according to Andersen, who noted that attempts at staging the novel in the Nordic countries had failed. However, the parts of the film featuring Bill Sikes 'formed a parallel dramatic film version in pure Dickens style' which did not fit in with the rest of the musical. 'And if Dickens himself had been able to see this version? The author of *The Pickwick Papers* would have been highly amused,' Andersen concluded.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A.H., 'Review: *Oliver Twist*', *Verdens Gang*, 23 November 1948.

<sup>56</sup> 'Dickens' *Oliver Twist* som operette på Colosseum', *Verdens Gang*, 24 December 1968.

<sup>57</sup> 'VGs kinobarometer', *Verdens Gang*, 2 January 1969, p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> A[rvid] A[ndersen], 'Sjarmerende Oliver-musikal', *Dagbladet*, 27 December 1968.

The review in *Morgenbladet* commended the makers of *Oliver!* for having made ‘a musical which does not violate Dickens’s story, but recreates it in a different medium’.<sup>59</sup> The critic assured the readers that Dickens’s rich and macabre world was kept intact in the film, only softened a little through song and dance. He preferred this form of entertainment to previous, more realistic Dickens films, which only brought the audience ‘frightful visions of terror’. The reviewer’s claim that the musical is faithful to Dickens seems odd, considering that he describes the novel as dark and terrifying. ‘The picture perfect, idealized romance, for that is what it is, goes straight to your heart’ he wrote, apparently forgetting what he had written earlier about the macabre world of Dickens. Fagin was characterized as ‘the crook with a heart of gold’, but this obvious departure from the novel was not commented on. The article concluded that ‘faithful to the author or not, it is not possible to make a better musical based on a novel’.

*Arbeiderbladet* chose a biographical approach, and according to the reviewer, Dickens – to whom he referred as ‘the old master of storytelling’ – ‘still had sole rights to the story’.<sup>61</sup> Addressing the issue of fidelity, this critic did not feel that Reed had ‘tampered with an old classic’. On the contrary, he suggested that Dickens might have appreciated the renewed interest in his novel at a time when social critique was not fashionable. It is perhaps not surprising that *Arbeiderbladet*, a newspaper associated with the Labour Party, should lament the lack of interest in Dickens as a social reformer.

*Oliver!* was given a more lukewarm reception in *Aftenposten*. The critic felt that the combination of light entertainment and brutal realism was unbalanced, and described the film as ‘an incredibly romanticizing take on Dickens’s drama’.<sup>62</sup> Nancy was too ethereal and unsullied to be believable as a prostitute working in the slums of London, and Bill Sikes too brutal. It is perhaps strange that the reviewer should object to Sikes being too vicious when he also felt that the film idealized the criminal world of the novel. *Morgenposten*’s review opened in a similarly sceptical manner: ‘*Oliver Twist* as a high-spirited musical – we have a right to be concerned’.<sup>64</sup> The critic went on to describe Dickens as ‘a poet of compassion’ whose novels are filled with tears and laughter, closely linking Dickens’s character to his works. He also mentioned Dickens’s social conscience and his role as a social commentator (‘samfunnsskildrer’) and remarked on the obvious discrepancy between the clean and

<sup>59</sup> ‘Morsom musikal om *Oliver Twist*’, *Morgenbladet*, 27 December 1968.

<sup>61</sup> T.N., ‘Dickens med ansiktsløftning’, *Arbeiderbladet*, 27 December 1968, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Sv.K., ‘Review: *Oliver Twist*’, *Aftenposten*, 27 December 1968, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> A.O., ‘*Oliver Twist* i operastil’, *Morgenposten*, 27 December 1968.

colourful sets of the film and ‘the cold, wet, shelterless midnight streets of London’ described by Dickens.<sup>65</sup> ‘Fagin the pimp, Nancy and Bill radiate neither terror nor warmth’ the article asserted, and the spectacular dance sequences ‘make you forget that the film was supposed to be about the pauper boy and his little heart’. The reference to Oliver’s ‘little heart’ seems odd, but on the whole this reviewer seems to have had a greater knowledge of the novel than for instance *Morgenbladet*’s critic. He was, perhaps at least partly for this reason, also more concerned with issues of fidelity.

The critic reviewing the film for *Nationen* used sentimental language throughout the piece, describing *Oliver Twist* as ‘Charles Dickens’s immortal novel’, and later as ‘this beautiful story’.<sup>67</sup> After giving a brief summary of the novel’s plot, the reviewer encouraged those who wished to know how the story ends to see the film. However, he neglected to inform potential viewers that the musical and the novel have radically different endings. Carol Reed has managed to ‘preserve the spirit of Dickens’, and his re-imagining of the novel is well worth seeing, the reviewer enthused. His idea of ‘the spirit of Dickens’ did not seem to encompass the author’s dark, satirical side, which is hardly present in the film. The critic was especially impressed by the sets, and surmised that the production company must have put a lot of money into the visual aspect of the film. ‘The filth and grime in the slums where Fagin and his gang live makes you shudder,’ he said, and felt certain that the audience is presented with the real ‘old London’. Dickens is here equated with Victorian London, in what Marsh has described as ‘that mysterious slippage of modern culture, whereby Dickens = London = Victorian = England, a slippage which dictates [...] that armchair tourists need only pop *Oliver!* in the VCR to walk the streets of “Dickens’s London.”’<sup>68</sup> Evidently, the film conformed to the reviewer’s expectations of Victorian London, whereas other reviewers, with different expectations, were disappointed. *Nationen*’s only reservation concerned the lack of seamless fluidity between the musical numbers and the rest of the action. The end product was ‘a film which Dickens’s classic novel deserves’.

*Vårt Land* echoed the scepticism of *Morgenposten*’s critic, and asked ‘what would Charles Dickens say if he saw his touching book *Oliver Twist* – in which he severely criticizes the social injustice of 19<sup>th</sup> century England – as a musical?’<sup>69</sup> Dickens’s novels, in this perspective, were apparently not to be taken lightly, or out of context. The reviewer expressed

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<sup>65</sup> Dickens, ‘The Author’s Preface to the Third Edition’, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Ringe, ‘Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* gjenskapt i vakker film: Flott musikal av gammel romanklassiker’, *Nationen*, 27 December 1968.

<sup>68</sup> Marsh, p. 207.

<sup>69</sup> Gr, ‘Review: *Oliver!*’, *Vårt Land*, 27 December 1968.

relief that the social conditions which Dickens wrote about were not present in 'our modern welfare state', and speculated whether, a hundred years from now, musicals would be made about 'the grave problems of our time'. The portrayal of Fagin and his gang was accused of being idealizing, and made the critic feel 'slightly unwell'. Crime as entertainment, then, is not good, according to this critic. Where Dickens sought to 'dim the false glitter surrounding something which really did exist', the film, apparently, did the exact opposite.<sup>71</sup> *Vårt Land*, being a Christian and relatively conservative newspaper, did not miss the opportunity to remind its readers that the film was forbidden for children under the age of twelve.

Most of the reviewers agreed that the sets and décor were stunning, and that the cast's performance was outstanding, especially that of Ron Moody as Fagin. The music was well received too, and in a later article, *Verdens Gang* praised Shani Wallis's performance, in particular her version of the hit song 'As long as he needs me' to which she brought 'more feeling and understanding' than ever before.<sup>72</sup> The occasion was the release of the film soundtrack. The article went on to claim that the film version was even better than the Broadway musical. 'Lionel Bart's music is the kind that makes you want to listen to it again and again.'

The film seemed to be just as popular almost 20 years later, when it was shown on television at Christmas in 1986. 'Dickens's social criticism has been toned down in the musical version,' wrote Britt Rogstad in *Verdens Gang*.<sup>73</sup> Of the novel, she stated that 'Dickens did not hesitate to include shocking material when describing the degrading life of the slums. The book contains episodes of child abuse, child crime, prostitution and murder.' *Oliver!* aired again in 1988, though this time on Swedish channel TV2, which was available to many Norwegians. This event occasioned several newspaper articles in Norway, a testament to the film's continuing appeal. Writing for *Aftenposten*, journalist Leslie Goldsack called it 'a jolly family film most of the time', but feared that very young children might find Bill Sikes's brutality too frightening.<sup>74</sup> Borghild Maaland and *Verdens Gang* provided a short history of the film versions of *Oliver Twist*, and suggested that *Oliver!* had become so popular because it softened Dickens's harsh realism.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Dickens, 'The Author's Preface to the Third Edition', p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> MacEric, 'Oliver, musikk som gir mersmak', *Verdens Gang*, 15 January 1969.

<sup>73</sup> Britt Rogstad, 'Evigunge Oliver Twist', *Verdens Gang*, 31 December 1986, p. 52.

<sup>74</sup> Leslie Goldsack, 'En syngende Oliver', *Aftenposten*, 22 September 1988, p. 75.

<sup>75</sup> Borghild Maaland, 'Oscar-vinneren "Oliver!" i TV 2', *Verdens Gang*, 22 September 1988, p. 45.

**'He was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery'**

Almost forty years had passed since the last large-scale film version of *Oliver Twist* was made when acclaimed director Roman Polanski in 2005 chose the novel as the subject for his new film following *The Pianist*. Ben Kinglsey starred as Fagin, with Barney Clark as Oliver and Jeremy Swift playing Mr. Bumble. Like Lean, Polanski chose to leave out the part of the plot concerning the Maylies. However, Polanski went further, omitting Monks and the plot to rob Oliver of his inheritance. The film was shot on location in Prague and various other places in the Czech Republic.<sup>76</sup>

Most of the reviews published in the Norwegian press commented on the obvious link between Polanski's childhood experiences in the Krakow ghetto and the plot of *Oliver Twist*. Being of Jewish descent, his parents were sent to the concentration camps, but Polanski survived. His faithfulness to Dickens was commonly perceived as a lack of originality, and Borghild Maaland of *Verdens Gang* felt that this version looked too much like the BBC TV adaptations.<sup>77</sup> This could be said to represent a subtle shift in attitude from reviews of earlier films, where faithfulness to the novel was generally praised. Critic Martin Nordvik noted the director's loyalty towards the characters: like the novel, the film kept the line between heroes and villains sufficiently blurred.<sup>78</sup> According to Nordvik, the atmosphere was convincing, even though it did not claim to be 'real'. He felt that Polanski had not paid much attention to the humorous aspects of the story, making it a less family-friendly film. Britt Sørensen of *Bergens Tidende* found Polanski's film stripped of melodrama and sentimentality, and was surprised by its contemporary appeal. Still, she described the film as

an epic drama which includes everything we have come to expect of a classic Dickens: the monstrous adults, the abusers of power, the huddled small folk, the muddy streets of East London crowded with whores and drunks, covered in cobblestones and horse dung. And not least: a small menagerie of fairytale-like figures.<sup>79</sup>

Sørensen's comment touches on an important point, namely that a work by Dickens raises certain expectations in the audience. Dickens is a concept, or perhaps rather a number of concepts, not simply an author. In a way he has become synonymous with the world he created in his novels.

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<sup>76</sup> *The Internet Movie Database*, <http://www.imdb.com/> [accessed 28 April 2011]

<sup>77</sup> Borghild Maaland, 'Hjerte for barna', *Verdens Gang*, 28 September 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Martin Nordvik, 'Kampen for tilværelsen', *adressa.no*, 28 September 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Britt Sørensen, 'Mørk og vakker *Oliver Twist*', *Bergens Tidende*, 28 September 2006.

*Aftenposten*'s Per Haddal turned to the link between Dickens and the child, and said of Polanski that he, 'like Dickens, envisions the world through the eyes of a child', creating a place where adults appear as frightening figures.<sup>80</sup> As in the reviews of Lean's film, the link between Dickens and children was emphasized. *Dagbladet*'s critic, Inger Bentzerud, suggested that because the film was so faithful to the original, it could be seen as 'an alternative for those who do not want to read the book'.<sup>81</sup> However, she felt that the film was too one-dimensional, and lacked an original take on the well-known story. Her final comment lays the first fault at the author's door: 'but Dickens paints with a broad brush himself, so perhaps we should not expect subtlety and nuance.' She accuses Dickens of being superficial, which is hardly a new complaint, especially when it is made about his characters. It is possible, however, to see this not as a fault, but as a deliberate device used by the author. According to Steven Connor, 'in Dickens's art of crass and flagrant caricature, the superficiality goes, so to speak, all the way down.'<sup>83</sup> To Connor, however, this is a resource, and a peculiar cultural challenge. According to critic Anders Røeggen 'most of us know the story of *Oliver Twist*, but a little reminder like this [film] will not interfere with the pictures in our mind's eye. At best, the classic story is just corrected a little by being beautifully filmed'.<sup>84</sup> Lean's 1948 film version was mentioned by almost all the critics as the definitive screen adaptation of Dickens's novel. Espen Svenningsen Rambøl of *Dagsavisen* asked whether we really needed a new film version of *Oliver Twist* at all.<sup>85</sup>

### **'Every loathsome indication of filth, rot and garbage'**

This version of *Oliver Twist* was shown on NRK at Christmas in 2008, and aired again during Christmas 2010. The first round had an average of 550 000 viewers each night.<sup>86</sup> It was generally well received by the press, but none of the reviewers was completely convinced by the production. Critic Reidar Spigseth of *Dagsavisen* compared it to the production of *Bleak House* which had appeared on Norwegian television in 2006, and noted that the latter was far

<sup>80</sup> Per Haddal, 'Polanski imponerer igjen', *Aftenposten*, 28 September 2006.

<sup>81</sup> Inger Bentzerud, 'Velkjent Oliver', *Dagbladet*, 28 September 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Steven Connor, 'Introduction', in *Charles Dickens*, ed. by Steven Connor (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 1-33 (p. 1).

<sup>84</sup> Anders Røeggen, 'Klassisk fra Polanski', *TV2 Nettavisen*, 28 September 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Espen Svenningsen Rambøl, 'Let's Twist again', *Dagsavisen*, 28 September 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Elisabeth Bie, 'Seertall uke 52: En helt tradisjonell unntakstilstand', *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 30 December 2008, p. 30.

superior.<sup>87</sup> He felt that the new series was ‘a modernised, cheerful tribute to Dickens’ but that many of the Dickensian qualities had been lost in the adaptation. Furthermore, according to Spigseth, the storyline was severely compressed, and the atmosphere too sunny, resulting in a decidedly family-friendly affair. A reviewer in *Adresseavisen* claimed the exact opposite, commending the makers of the series for their realistic and gritty rendering of the story and setting.<sup>89</sup> The makers of the drama have skimped on nothing, the reviewer said, and this excessiveness suited Dickens’s classic story.

Dickens is often credited with having ‘invented Christmas’, a phrase coined by F.G. Kitton more than a hundred years ago.<sup>91</sup> David Parker, former curator of the Charles Dickens Museum, observes of this notion that ‘it has rooted itself in Anglo-Saxon consciousness with all the uncompromising persistence of a computer virus. There is no getting it out, it seems, without extraordinary pains, and it is always likely to come back.’<sup>92</sup> The idea seems very much a part of Norwegian consciousness too: it has almost become a tradition for NRK to show television serials based on Dickens’s novels during Christmas. In his review of the BBC’s *Oliver Twist*, Mikael Godø, writing for *Dagbladet*, said that at Christmas ‘we like being able to sink into the sofa with a handful of dried dates and lose ourselves in stories about the terrible conditions of the past’.<sup>93</sup> However, he added that Dickens needed to be updated and adjusted to our changing needs, both in terms of visual effects and as regards our ability to follow a complex plot over a long period of time. Like Spigseth, he too held the 2005 *Bleak House* version up as the golden standard, and found BBC’s *Oliver Twist* to be a different species entirely. He was one of only two Norwegian commentators who commented on Nancy being played by a black actress, Sophie Okonedo, a fact which spawned some controversy in Britain. He found Fagin as acted by Timothy Spall to be less cruel than Dickens’s original villain, and noted that Dickens had to edit this character due to accusations of anti-Semitism.

A reviewer in *Stavanger Aftenblad* drew attention to the fact that this particular TV adaptation was not faithful to the novel, since it changed the plot and updated the story.<sup>95</sup> Linn Linn Sollied Madsen admitted that she had not read the book, and that most of what she knew

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<sup>87</sup> Reidar Spigseth, ‘Familie-Dickens til jul’, *Dagsavisen*, 23 December 2008. For an example of the reception of BBC’s *Bleak House*, see Per Haddal, ‘Dickens og BBC på det aller beste’, *Aftenposten*, 27 December 2005.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Mørk og morsom *Oliver Twist*’, *Adresseavisen*, 24 December 2008, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> David Parker, *Christmas and Charles Dickens* (New York: AMS Press, 2005), p. ix.

<sup>92</sup> Parker, p. ix.

<sup>93</sup> Mikael Godø, ‘Liv og røre: En stinkende og livfull Dickens-tolkning’, *Dagbladet*, 24 December 2008.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Episk kostymedrama hører romjulen til’, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 27 December 2008, p. 30.



of the story came from Disney's 1988 animated version *Oliver and Company*.<sup>96</sup> Many critics noted that *Oliver Twist* has been filmed and adapted for television a number of times, and that this version did not stand out in any way. Some felt that the series ought to have had more episodes, and that the story moved too quickly, making it difficult to understand the characters' motivation. These reviews confirm the link between Dickens, Christmas and televised costume drama, and show that there is a common idea about what makes a good television Dickens: it must be dark, gritty and heavy in Victorian atmosphere. However, the critics disagreed as to whether the BBC had succeeded in recreating Dickens's world in this production.

## Conclusion

In the years following the Second World War, Lean's films based on *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist* became tremendously popular in Norway, and they were still shown on television four decades later. However, the first reception was marked by a negative reaction to the anti-Semitic portrayal of Fagin. Generally speaking, the Norwegian film critics do not, unsurprisingly, use an overly theoretical language in their reviews, and many probably did not think about such matters at all, but almost all of them discuss the film's fidelity to the novel and what to expect of certain kinds of adaptation. The reviews call attention to different aspects of the novel, and though most of the reviewers showed an appreciation of Dickens, some were critical of what they perceived as a lack of realism in his works. Lionel Bart's musical *Oliver!* and Carol Reed's film version of the same were much admired too, and without a doubt inspired many of stage versions performed throughout Norway in the decades that followed. The most influential of these was the production by Familieteatret AS, performed in 1992. In 2008, Sogn and Fjordane Teater offered a new interpretation of the novel on stage, which received critical acclaim. All the major film and television versions of *Oliver Twist* have been shown on Norwegian television.

The interest in Dickens on film and television does not seem as if it will abate anytime soon. NRK showed the BBC adaptation of *Little Dorrit* in 2010 to great acclaim, and the same year *The Christmas Carol* in 3-D by Walt Disney Pictures had a successful run in Norwegian cinemas. Whether *Oliver Twist* will be made into a film or television series in the

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<sup>96</sup> Linn Sollied Madsen, 'Fin Oliver uten twist', *TV2 Nettavisen*, 12 January 2009.

near future is difficult to say, but what is certain is that the novel will continue to live its life on the screen and the stage.

## **‘So much pains about one chalk-faced kid’: Concluding Remarks**

‘There are a good many books, are there not, my boy?’ said Mr. Brownlow: observing the curiosity with which Oliver surveyed the shelves that reached from the floor to the ceiling.

‘A great number, sir,’ replied Oliver. ‘I never saw so many.’

‘You shall read them, if you behave well,’ said the old gentleman kindly; ‘and you shall like that, better than looking at the outsides, – that is, in some cases; because there *are* books of which the backs and covers are by far the best parts.’

‘I suppose they are those heavy ones, sir,’ said Oliver, pointing to some large quartos, with a good deal of gilding about the binding. (97)

This thesis has attempted to look both at the outsides *and* the insides of the Norwegian editions of *Oliver Twist*. Materiality matters, and my survey of these editions is based on an inclusive concept of how texts produce their meanings. Whether the backs and covers are the best parts of these books may of course be a matter of personal opinion, but what is certain is that they too, along with other bibliographical codes, help shape our reading of *Oliver Twist*. However, there is perhaps also something to be said for the old adage ‘never judge a book by its cover’, as notes in the quotation with which I have chosen to begin this conclusion. Moving from the text external to the text internal, i.e., to the linguistic codes of the text, my survey has shown that some purportedly unabridged editions of Dickens’s novel are in fact anything but, while one of the children’s versions goes further than the original in describing brutality and murder. But before going into more detail about the translators’ treatment of *Oliver Twist*, I will take a step back and at this point briefly recapitulate the Norwegian publishing history of the novel.

Since it first appeared in 1880, *Oliver Twist* has been published 20 times in Norway, including reprints. The first edition in Norwegian was published in two volumes by Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag, one the largest Norwegian publishing houses at the time; the translator remains unknown. Translations into Norwegian had become more common during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Norwegian book market grew and gradually sought to become independent of the Danish publishing industry. The next Norwegian *Oliver Twist* appeared on Nasjonalforlaget in 1935 as part of a series of Dickens novels, all translated by Henrik Rytter. In 1940, at the outset of the Second World War, the first abridged versions aimed at children were published, one by Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, and another, somewhat longer version, by John Griegs Forlag. Dreyers Forlag published the next non-children’s

edition in 1949, the year after David Lean's film version of *Oliver Twist* had appeared. The publisher clearly felt that their translation would benefit from being associated with the film, and included several screen shots in the book. Reprints of the Nasjonalforlaget and Dreyer editions appeared during the 1950s and 60s, along with a new children's version by Gyldendal which drew heavily upon the 1940 edition. In 1976 *Oliver Twist* appeared for the first time in a picture book version, published by Norsk Kunstnerforlag. During the 1980s, three children's editions were published: a reprint of Gyldendal's version, a picture book by Skandinavisk Presse and an abridged version by Ex Libris. The abridged versions of *Oliver Twist* dominated the next decade too, though out of the five titles published, only one was not a reprint: a picture book version by Luther Forlag. When ForlagETT LibriArte published a reprint of the Dreyers Forlag translation in 1998, it had been thirty years since the last version meant for adults had been published. At the moment of writing, the most recent Norwegian edition of *Oliver Twist* available is an abridged children's version published by Gyldendal in 2003.

Most of the newer editions of *Oliver Twist* are based on older translations, with few, if any, changes made to the text. The situation is further complicated because the editions rarely state which text has been used as the basis for the translation. A translation could in fact be based on a translation in a different language instead of the original text. This is indeed the case with the Ex Libris version of *Oliver Twist*, which is based on an abridged Danish version, but I suspect that the same is true of at least some of the other Norwegian editions. Of the three translations aimed at adults, only two are easily available today: the 1935 version by Henrik Rytter and the 1949 translation by Eivind Hauge. While both contain foreignizing and domesticating elements, they do on the whole tend to bring the original text towards the reader and the moment of publication. Rytter goes further than Hauge, in that he translates place names and uses Norwegian equivalents wherever possible. His translation is more dated, but at the same time more faithful to the original. The most surprising finding in this considerable corpus of Norwegian *Oliver Twists* is perhaps the fact that Dreyers Forlag's edition was heavily abridged, especially since it claimed the opposite, and since this information seems to have been accepted by earlier scholars in the field.

The children's editions of *Oliver Twist* more or less follow the same pattern of adaptation: only the action-filled sequences are translated, the rest is omitted. This is not to say that these editions are 'bad' translations; they are tailored to meet the demands of a specific market and audience, and must be read accordingly. In his survey of 'The Bibliotheque Bleu', Roger Chartier discovered that 'the very structures of the book were

governed by what the publishers thought to be the mode of reading of the clientele they were targeting'.<sup>1</sup> The same is true of the Norwegian children's editions of *Oliver Twist*, in which the texts have been shortened and the language simplified in order to accommodate younger readers. Though many of these editions are very similar in structure and content, two versions stand out from the rest: Herbrand Lavik's translation, published by John Griegs Forlag, and the Ex Libris edition, translated by Morten Jørgensen. Lavik has translated the text extremely freely, with numerous changes in the plot and even several new episodes. His version is also far more graphic than the other children's editions. Jørgensen on the other hand, often stays surprisingly close to the original text, though much has of course been omitted.

There seems to be a clear division between *Oliver Twist* being presented as light entertainment in musical form or an adapted adventure story for children, and the versions which stress the more serious nature of the work, and in which Dickens's social criticism is emphasized. The latter is for instance the case in the theatre version performed by Sogn og Fjordane Teater in 2008. This is clearly reflected in the reviews of films and television series: some critics find a film like *Oliver!* too sugar-coated and unrealistic, while others accuse David Lean's version of being too dark and horrible. People, Norwegians included, clearly expect quite different things when they hear Dickens or *Oliver Twist*. Where some think of social satire, others expect comedy; still others imagine Marxist propaganda, where some anticipate a sentimental tearjerker. It might be claimed that all of these aspects are found in Dickens's writing, it depends who is looking and what they are looking for. In this connection, it seems apt to note Stanley Fish's notion of interpretive communities:

Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading, and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.<sup>2</sup>

The Dickens scholar Steven Connor echoes this idea when he says that 'it is hard to say when any of Dickens's novels are read for the first time, all readings of Dickens are, from the

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Chartier, 'Labourers and Voyagers', in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair Cleary (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 47-58 (p. 52).

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Fish, 'Interpreting the *Variorum*', in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 350-358 (p. 357).

beginning, rereadings'.<sup>3</sup> When we come to Dickens, we already have preconceptions about the author and perhaps also about the work, and are therefore unable to start with a clean slate. Wolfgang Iser makes a related point, stating that 'while expectations may be continually modified, and images continually expanded, the reader will strive, even if unconsciously, to fit everything together in a consistent pattern'.<sup>4</sup> This desire to find a cohesive pattern shapes our readings of *Oliver Twist*, and, along with our interpretive strategies, determines what we take away from the work when we have finished reading.

Judging from the number of translations made of the novel, and from media interest in the adaptations of it, *Oliver Twist* is one of the most popular of Dickens's novels in Norway. The figure of Oliver has become the definitive symbol of the orphan, and scenes from *Oliver Twist* are often used to comment on contemporary problems such as poverty and child abuse. The now internationally renowned crime writer Jo Nesbø counts *Oliver Twist* among his favourite books, while author Ragnar Hovland writes that reading Dickens is 'like coming home', and even goes so far as to say that he feels closer to some of Dickens's characters than to his own cousins.<sup>5</sup> Dickens is a forgotten writer, according to Hovland, overshadowed by his contemporaries, Balzac and Flaubert. This is, however, only partly true, I think. It would be more accurate to say that the Norwegian academy and public alike have forgotten that Dickens wrote complex novels for adults. Dickens in Norway has become synonymous with children's books and television dramas.

There are subtle signs, however, that this situation may slowly be changing. The new crop of translations which appeared in the 1990s, along with Ragnhild Eikli's translation of *Bleak House*, to be published by Aschehoug next year, is evidence of the growing awareness of Dickens's status as a canonized author.<sup>6</sup> The ever popular television adaptations of his novels might create new readerships, and as Norwegians grow more proficient in English, many will perhaps read Dickens in the original. 2012 marks the bicentenary of Dickens's birth; perhaps it will also come to mark the start of a new wave of interest in, and appreciation of, 'The Inimitable' and his works.

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Connor, 'Introduction', in *Charles Dickens*, ed. by Steven Connor (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 1-33 (p. 31).

<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Iser, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane p. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 50-69 (p. 58).

<sup>5</sup> Sølvi Wærhaug, 'Punktum for Harry Hole', *Verdens Gang*, 16 December 2009; Ragnar Hovland, 'Som å komma heim', *Klassekampen*, 5 December 2003; Alfred Fidjestøl, 'Slår eit slag for klassikarane', *Klassekampen*, 5 December 2003. Also see his new book *Som å komma heim*, a collection of his essays on literature.

<sup>6</sup> There is also a forthcoming book on the European reception of Dickens, in which Tore Rem has written a chapter on Dickens in Norway.

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## Appendix A: The Norwegian Editions of *Oliver Twist*

Year	Title	Place	Publisher	Edition	Translator
1880	<i>Oliver Twist: En Fortælling</i>	Kristiania	Alb. Cammermeyers Forlag		Anonymous
1935	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Nasjonalforlaget		Henrik Rytter
1940	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal Norsk Forlag		Hugo Gyllander
1940	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Bergen	John Griegs Forlag		Herbrand Lavik
1949	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Dreyers Forlag		Eivind Hauge
1950	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal Norsk Forlag	1st ed	Torleif Goderstad
1962	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Nasjonalforlaget	Reprint	Henrik Rytter
1962	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal Norsk Forlag	2nd ed	Torleif Goderstad
1968	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Dreyers Forlag	Reprint	Eivind Hauge
1969	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Samlerens Bokklubb/ Frogner trykkerier		Eivind Hauge
1976	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Norsk Kunstnerforlag		Unni Evang
1980	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal	3rd ed	Torleif Goderstad
1985	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Skandinavisk Presse		Oddrun Lyngstad
1988	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Ex Libris Forlag		Morten Jørgensen
1993	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal	4th ed	Torleif Goderstad
1994	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Ex Libris Forlag A/S	Reprint	Morten Jørgensen
1995	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Luther Forlag		Ellen Marie Hansen
1997	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal Tiden	5th ed	Torleif Goderstad
1998	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	ForlagETT LibriArte		Trygve Norum /Eivind Hauge
2003	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Oslo	Gyldendal	6th ed	Torleif Goderstad

Pages	Illustrations	Series	Price
2 vols, 358 and 426	None	Miniaturbibliothek for romanlæsning	
480	None		NOK 4.90
118	None	Gyldendals Gode Guttebøker	NOK 2.10
262	None		NOK 3.85
384	George Cruikshank/ Photographs from David Lean's 1948 film.		NOK 14.00
155	Gunnar Bratlie	De Aller Beste	NOK 3.85
480	None	Levende Litteratur	NOK 29.00
140	Gunnar Bratlie	De Aller Beste	NOK 7.50
384	George Cruikshank	Utvalte romaner	
348	George Cruikshank		NOK 22.50
28	Illustrator unknown		NOK 24.50
171	None	GG-bøkene	NOK 25.00
30	P. Ruben	Bokklubben Barnas Bokpakke	NOK 31.45
129	Cover illustration by Robert Viby	Berømte Klassikere	
173	Cover illustration by Hilde Kramer	Gyldendals Ungdomsklassikere	NOK 98.00
129	Cover illustration by Robert Viby	Berømte Klassikere	NOK 48.00
63	José Pérez Montero	Charles Dickens' klassikere	
173	Cover illustration by Hilde Kramer	Gyldendals Ungdomsklassikere	NOK 98.00
384	George Cruikshank		
	Cover illustration by Hilde Kramer	Gyldendals Ungdomsklassikere	

## Appendix B: Screen and Stage Adaptations of *Oliver Twist* Showed or Performed in Norway

Year	Type	Title	Company/director
1922	Film	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Frank Lloyd
1948	Film	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	David Lean
1968	Film	<i>Oliver!</i>	Carol Reed
1988	Animated film	<i>Oliver and Company</i>	Walt Disney
1991	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Bærum Barneteater
1992	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Familieteatret AS
1999	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Fyllingsdalen Nye Teater
2000	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Risør Musikkteater
2000	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Tut & Kjør
2003	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Bagabu Ungdomslag
2004	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Agder Teater
2005	Film	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Roman Polanski
2007	Theatre production	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Teater Ibsen
2008	Television series	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	BBC
2008	Theatre production	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Sogn og Fjordane Teater
2009	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Sandnes Kulturhus
2009	Musical	<i>Oliver!</i>	Kongsvinger amatørteater